

The Prince and the Pauper (who drives an Uber) by peterqpan

Series: [Harringrove Works \[5\]](#)

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: ACTUAL SEXYTIMES, Angst, Angst and Fluff and Smut, Billy's basically a single parent, Billy's getting his life together, Depressing past but hopeful present, Fluff, He and Max ran away, M/M, Schmoop, Steve wants to be a part of it...desperately, Steve's actual royalty, The quest for a winged buffalo plushie

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Summary:

Billy's just waiting for his Uber fare, working late, supporting Max, and barely paying for college, when an actual Prince Charming climbs into the back of his cab.

1. Chapter 1

Author's Note:

- For [FlashMountain](#).

No sex scenes yet, but I'll mark them with a horizontal line when they show up!

Not sure where this one's going. This is about a quarter of what I have written though, so maybe...more soon?

Billy pulled up alongside the line of parked cars outside the embassy to wait for his Uber fare, ignoring the honks, and clicking through his playlists for the one Max had rated “least offensive”. He frowned into his glove compartment at the assorted air fresheners, and grabbed a cold bottle of water, sticking it in the cup holder for the back seats.

He checked his shirt—probably he was picking up a janitor, but just his luck some prime minister’s car blew a tire, and *there he’d be* with some leader of a country and secret service in his car, covered with dried beans and guac like he’d killed a burrito with a spear and eaten its corpse with both hands, roaring and beating his chest—his shirt was clean, and he took a steadying breath.

While he was yanking his earring out and dropping it in the cup holder, his fare ducked inside behind him. “Hey,” Billy said, over the honking of the surrounding—furious—drivers, “You’re my fare? Mind if I get your full name?”

Something clonked into the door opposite his fare, and rattled around on the floor, and the man—younger than *Billy*, Billy was fairly sure—flopped sideways across the seats with a groan. Then he started *snickering*. “You sure you want all of it? You got something to write it down?”

Billy glared over his shoulder. “*Are you Steve*, my fare...what the *hell* are you wearing?!”

“You don’t like my sash?” his presumed fare laughed, lying across Billy’s back seats in some kind of extremely shiny white outfit, with medals, and a cross on a chain. “They said it matched my eyes.”

“What the *hell* are you...” Billy trailed off again. “Is that a *sword*? Is that a *tiara* on my floor?! Why in the *fuck*—”

“It’s a coronet,” the actual Disney Prince in his back seat corrected him, putting his probably very expensive loafers on the *window* as he laid back, closing his eyes.

“Get your goddamn feet off my window,” Billy hissed. “You *are* my *fare*, right? You’re not just some...cosplaying menace. Or is cosplay Cinderella about to climb in?” he squinted suspiciously at the embassy, and the irritating pile of shiny clothes in the back laughed again.

“I’m Stephen of Blois,” he said, and Billy’s hands flexed on the steering wheel. “I’m Grand Cross of the Order of the House of Orange.”

“You’re the right *person*—the fuck does that even mean,” Billy growled, pulling forward into traffic amidst an even louder cacophony of honks, like a herd of geese.

‘Stephen’ pointed at one of the medals. “Royal Air Squadron Commander,” he offered, and Billy contemplated hitting the brakes so hard his passenger fell off the seat.

“Stop fucking with me. Where the hell are we going,” he snarled, and all he got was a sigh.

“Anywhere, I guess. Where do people go when they’re fleeing the scene of a crime?” He sat up and leaned forward between the seats, and Billy got a noseful of expensive soap, aftershave, and breath against his ear. His very-much-gay dick woke up, and he cursed it, gritting his teeth.

“You’re saying you’re a *fugitive*? What’d you do, steal that ensemble from Elvis?” he shot back, and Steve snorted.

“No, I, uh. I just. I’m escaping a wedding.”

“Oh, shit,” Billy stared into the rearview mirror, and almost hit the car in front. “You—you what, you just left somebody standing at the altar?! That’s—what the *shit*—”

“No!” Steve yelped, then let his forehead fall against the seat behind Billy’s head, and groaned. “I didn’t—she just—I thought she, y’know, I didn’t think she *wanted to* wanted to, but we’re friends? And then she started yelling at me about her friend Barb, and—”

“Speak English,” Billy suggested, and Steve kicked the back of his seat.

“I *thought* we both knew we were getting married, and we’d just—be friends, you know, she’d do what...what she was going to do, and I’d do my thing, and we’d be *married*, succession secured, you know, so nobody would care—”

“Holy shit, you really are. Somebody,” Billy sputtered, hunching his shoulders a little as he registered he probably would not get a five-star rating for shouting at royalty. “Some tourist told me she was in town for ‘the wedding’ the other day. Thought she just thought everybody knew her niece, or something.”

“It’s been arranged since we were *six!*” Steve moaned, dropping back to lie across the seats again. He waved at the ceiling. “They got the cathedral and everything! She’s in the dress! And all of a sudden she starts crying ‘bullshit, bullshit’ that she can’t marry *me*, because Barb.”

“Who the hell is Barb,” Billy asked woodenly, his eyes wide as he turned onto a side street. “Wait, are you supposed to have a bodyguard?!”

“So I said okay, *I’d* call it off, if she was—she was gonna set the whole thing on fire, I think. It’ll be super romantic in the news,” he said, sounding wistful. “She’ll probably forget to change out of her wedding dress and go propose to her librarian right in front of everybody. Just...stomp in in her twenty-four foot train and propose over the Information desk.” He sighed.

“Where the hell am I supposed to be driving,” Billy whispered,

staring at the man in the back seat.

"I want drive-through," whined Stephen of Blois, dropping his chin on the seat behind Billy's shoulder. "I heard you can get *anything* at a drivethrough in America."

"Not really," Billy sighed, glancing at the pleading brown eyes in his rearview mirror. "I mean. Burgers. Tacos. Ice cream."

"Ice cream," breathed the royal in his backseat. "I want ice cream. I *deserve* ice cream."

"It's not very *good* ice cream," Billy told him. "I mean. You might want a...restaurant, or something."

"Ice cream!" Stephen said, throwing his fist forward like he was leading a charge, and Billy headed for the Dairy Queen.

"What do I even call you?" Billy asked, making an illegal u-turn as his passenger whooped. "Stephen?"

"Ugh, no. Steve is fine," said Steve, pressing his face against the side window, kicking his coronet, and tossing it into the front passenger seat. It glittered as it went by.

"Put your damn seatbelt on," Billy choked, watching the thing roll around, diamonds gleaming.

Steve grinned over, and did not.

"Where you actually going?" Billy asked, once they were in line. "Back to your hotel?"

"God, no, everybody's going to yell at me," Steve said, eyes narrowed at the menu. "May I...eat in your car?"

"Don't order food," Billy made a face. "The ice cream's okay, but the food is garbage."

"Hmm," Steve nodded, but ordered like five things, prompting Billy for *his* order, and then flirted with the people at the window, who stared open-mouthed.

"I think everybody else knows who you are," Billy said, finally, as they sat in the parking lot, and his royal passenger climbed out to sit in the front.

Steve chucked the coronet out of his seat again, over his shoulder into the back, and unwrapped everything to make happy humming noises into a banana split. "Nope," he said, around a whole scoop of ice cream with pineapple syrup. It dripped on his fancy jacket, and he swallowed, clearing his throat. "M'nobody. Where else can we go?"

"...I don't know," Billy ate his Blizzard with a spoon, watching the leader of some country somewhere trying to tie a knot, with his *tongue*, in the stem of the cherry off the sundae he'd bought at Dairy Queen.

After watching his fare try to eat a chocolate-dipped cone, and discover the inherent *trap* as the melted ice cream in the chocolate shell escaped through a crack and jizzed all over his fingers and shiny gold medals, Billy groaned into his hands. He leaned over and yanked the cone out of Steve's hand as he stared in betrayal at the ice cream running down his elbow.

Billy stuffed the ice cream grenade in the plastic bag their food had come in, and then started dabbing Steve off with a handful of napkins.

"My *ice cream cone*," Steve whispered, his expression shifting from betrayal to heartbreak. "What have you *done*."

"Can't believe you rule a country," Billy growled back. "I disarmed your goddamn *dipped cone bomb* before it ruined your fucking...Armani or whatever. *Thank me*."

"I was eating that," Steve muttered, but he started to grin as Billy leaned in, scrubbing down his wrist and neck. Steve started *laughing*, like Billy was the one being an idiot, and Billy felt himself flush as he folded the sticky napkin over and wiped ice cream off Steve's jaw, and Steve smiled, his eyes dark and warm in the light from the streetlamps. His breath was warm on Billy's fingers, and he smelled like chocolate.

Billy wanted to lick it off his lips. He jerked back and put both hands on the steering wheel, where he could keep an eye on them. *Don't touch him again*, he told himself sternly, and took a few slow breaths, telling himself to stop *noticing* the moles down Steve's neck, and the texture of the hair on his arm in Billy's hand.

Billy took another bite of Blizzard, and thought fixedly about the condensation on the cold cup dripping through his fingers, and the roof of his mouth going numb.

"Hey," Steve muttered, fiddling with his phone, his plastic spoon sticking out the side of his mouth. "Hey, Billy. I've got a bad idea. Let's do something. While I have, you know, uh, no security. Really bad idea." He took a deep breath. "Let's go *bowling*."

"What?!" Billy said, trying to breathe an oreo, and then he choked.

Steve patted him on the back, shoving his phone in Billy's face with a picture of a neon sign reading *Leatherneck Lanes*. "Come on," he leaned in, "—I just got stood up at the altar. Take me bowling?"

"Do you even *know how to bowl*?" Billy asked, once his lungs had some air in them.

"It says they rent *shoes*, and sell *wings*," said Steve, sounding perplexed. He frowned over, licking his lips, so they were shiny. "What are the wings for?"

Billy bit his lips together, *on the clock*, yet wanting to lean in and push his *fare* back against the seat, and lick into his mouth—and also, on top of it all, trying to think up a believable lie about buffalo wings. He stared into the prince's intent brown eyes. "...they're not real wings," he confessed, unable to pull his mind off kissing.

"I know they're not *real wings*," Steve rolled his eyes, scoffing. "Buffaloes don't have *wings*. Are they toy wings? Do you...do you buy accessories for your toy buffalo? It says they have a buffalo *ranch*."

Billy stared at the royalty in his car, mumbling about buffalo-themed bowling alleys, and wondered how anyone could stand him up at the

altar.

Driving through for ice cream already had people snapping Steve's photo, so for the bowling alley, Billy rummaged around in his bag and threw his sweatshirt at the prince's head. "Change up, Charming," he said, "—or we'll summon up the media."

"Oh, neat!" Steve said, *excited* about the sweatshirt, and trying to spread it across the dash. "Is this a *hoodie*? It is! Look, it has a little hood! And a front pocket, like a kangaroo!"

"Just put it *on* before I shove it in your *mouth*," Billy hissed, his blood pounding in his ears as Steve stripped down, and the Royal Abs were exposed under the light of streetlamps. The rain on his windshield cast shadows of water trickling down Steve's unbuttoned shirt and the skin of his flexing torso as he squirmed out of the stiff uniform-style jacket. He leaned back in the seat, his shirt sliding up with the jacket to show his chest hair and the flex of his shoulderblades, and then yanked it back down, pushing up his sleeves. It was still open all down the front.

"Let me finish my ice cream," Steve mumbled. "Before I get it on your hoodie."

Billy stared straight ahead as Steve made MNAH MNEEEH noises licking the underside of the banana split container, and then began licking ice cream off *himself* from elbow to thumb. "Put the damn sweatshirt on," Billy growled, both hands clenched on the steering wheel, and Steve laughed.

"Don't want to get it all sticky," he said, and Billy glared over to meet sparkling brown eyes and a wide smile.

Finally, Billy grabbed the hoodie and shoved it in his prince's face. They went in the bowling alley, which was how he ended up with his arms around royalty, helping the prince of, it sounded like, several countries *aim his balls*.

And Billy couldn't stop giggling softly about the buffalos.

"They should have toy buffalos," Steve insisted occasionally, out of the blue, glancing from Billy's grin to the bar. "They should! I want one!"

"Yeah, sure, Your Highness," Billy agreed, nodding with his eyes wide.

"Hey," said Steve, watching his gutter ball pass the pins. "I have, ah, I have another one. Bad idea. Probably it's stupid."

"Let's hear it," said Billy, licking his lips, and rubbing his hands on his pants, because fucking *Prince Steve* was warm and toned in Billy's sweatshirt, and kept leaning into his space. "What's your bad idea?"

Steve watched Billy's mouth, grinning like an asshole, and Billy cleared his throat, stepping back. Steve stepped close again, close enough for Billy to feel his body heat. "Let's get a motel," he whispered, biting his lips in a tense smile. "Tonight."

"Holy shit," Billy staggered backward into the score calculator, staring at Steve's face.

He looked intent, but didn't close the distance. *Max is going to murder me*, Billy thought, licking his lips again. "Fuck. Yeah. Okay." Steve grinned, and opened his mouth—probably to say something else irritating—and Billy held up a hand. "Wait, hold up. I gotta call my little sister."

"You have a little sister?" Steve's face softened, and Billy knew he was fucked.

"Yeah, and I gotta let her know I'm not drunk in a ditch somewhere," Billy muttered, turning away so he couldn't see Prince Goddamn Charming, looking ridiculous in styled hair and casual clothes, his whole face an enthusiastic question mark about Billy's only family.

Max answered the phone with "I made tuna. You want some?"

"No, uh, I—" Billy turned to watch Steve lining himself up to throw again.

His rented bowling shoes squeaked loudly against the floor, and the lights shone off his hair, rumpled where he'd yanked at his crown. He narrowed his eyes at other bowlers, glancing around and scooting his feet with an intent expression. The peal of raucous music from a pinball machine startled him, and he hopped sideways on one foot, but then firmed his jaw, rolled his shoulders, and used his Royal Grace to throw the carefully selected Royal Bowling Ball straight into the Royal Gutter.

"What?" Max bit out.

Billy swung to face the other way, smiling helplessly. "I, uh. I'll be late."

"Oh," she said, and he heard a whoop from behind him, and turned around. A *kid* was showing Billy's fugitive prince how to bowl, and it looked more like they were practising poses for the Power Rangers. "Billy?" came Max's voice. "Uh. A-are you in a bar?"

"No!" he told her, grabbing the phone with both hands. "No, no, it's—I mean, yeah, there's a bar in here, but we're bowling. I, uh, the um, my fare wanted to go bowling. And he doesn't know how to bowl. I'm—I'm just showing him how to bowl."

"Oh," she said, and he hoped she was distracted, and not trying to stare through the phone as hard as he was.

"We ordered some hot wings," he reported. "And he wants to try root beer. He's not from—they don't have root beer. There. Where he's from. I'm on the *clock*, Max."

"Okay," she said, and he ran his fingers through his hair.

"Max, he is *hot as hell*, I am—I think I'm like 30% gayer since he got in my car—"

She laughed, but didn't say anything.

"He's a Disney character," Billy hissed. "It's okay, I-I *swear*. This isn't—I'm not—I'm not doing...*dangerous* dumb shit, I promise. I'm not fucking up. I—I am gonna have the dumbest story to tell you, but I gotta go."

“You left sunscreen in your pocket in the wash, asshole,” she said, rallying. “Dumber than that?”

“Oh. Shit. Sorry!” Billy laughed. “I owe you one.”

“*Yeah* you do,” she muttered, and hung up.

Billy wandered back to Steve, still frowning down at his phone, and Steve threw an arm around his shoulder, leaning close. Billy inhaled cologne that probably cost as much as his rent.

“Unexpected obligations?” Steve asked, smiling.

He looked a little downcast, and Billy wondered what to *say*—his and Max’s family history was hardly first date material. With a *prince*. A prince who was his *Uber fare*, he reminded himself, and not his *date*, not really. The reminder was bracing, like stepping out into a cold wind. Billy’s had been the first car that pulled up, and he’d blushed and stared, and this prince had a few hours to kill. *What am I doing*, Billy wondered. “I like to call and check in.”

“How old is she?” Steve asked. “Do you need to get back?”

“Uh,” Billy said, grimacing, and remembered Max had rented a movie they needed to watch, and he had homework for three classes.

“I apologize,” his prince said, stepping away. “Of course you have your own schedule. Thank you for your patience with me. Where would it be convenient to drop me off?”

“Shit, no,” Billy followed him like a moth, ready to smack himself to death against a shining light. “I’d be working all night anyway.” He picked out a bowling ball. “You haven’t even tried root beer. I got all night.”

“You’ll stay?” Steve’s polite smile broadened into a real grin, and his cheeks flushed. Billy wanted to *bite* them, and he shook his head, reminding himself to listen. “...thank you,” his prince said.

Billy *tried*, honestly, to bowl badly, and even things out, but His

Highness was unparalleled at somehow missing all the pins even when he managed to keep it in the lane. Towards the end of the game, Billy was actually trying to help him *bowl*—instead of pretending in order to wrap both arms around him—and Steve kept leaning back to try and see his face and almost knocking them over, so they were laughing so hard they nearly fell.

Steve swiveled in his arms to face him, and Billy tried to pay attention as the right royal arms slid around his neck, the warm weight of a muscled body leaned against him, padded by Billy's sweatshirt over starched groom trousers, and over it all Steve was grinning, pink-cheeked and a little smug. "Let's go somewhere and talk," he whispered.

Billy swallowed as his mouth started overproducing saliva, realizing he was about to get his face fucked in a bowling alley during work hours—by a man disappointed by the lack of winged buffalo plushies available for purchase.

"Yeah," Billy whispered. "Yeah, okay." He checked his back pocket for a condom, yanking Steve along behind him to the bathrooms, and then hauled him in the empty stall, and pinned him to the door, already breathing a little heavily in anticipation.

"Whoa," Steve laughed again, watching Billy lick his lips. "Wow. Uh, I just—*mmph*." He opened his mouth for Billy's, humming as he ran his hands down Billy's back, and yanked him even closer with one hand on each of Billy's ass cheeks. "Damn," he whispered, pulling back, and Billy leaned in again, knowing men that dragged him into bathrooms didn't tend to be *patient*, but also that Steve still tasted like chocolate and ice cream, and he kept making little happy noises.

"Sorry," Billy muttered, bringing his hand up to turn Steve's head to just the right angle, and counting down fifteen seconds in his head to keep kissing the man before he had to pull back and get down to business. He could feel Steve's smile bunched under his hand, and he couldn't not kiss that too, mumbling 'Sorry, sorry,' again as Steve laughed.

"Just—jussec," Steve grabbed Billy's face with both hands and held

him off, grinning. “Just—wait for a moment. You won’t get in trouble? Coming away with me?”

Billy snorted. “Maybe with Max.” At Steve’s narrowed eyes, he shook his head. “My sister. And no. Nah, it’s just—I get paid for jobs I take. I don’t have hours. I logged off.”

“So you were working tonight, and now you aren’t,” Steve said, running his thumb up Billy’s cheek, and Billy licked out and grabbed it in his mouth.

“Mmn,” he grunted back, sucking hard, and Steve’s head thudded against the door as he made a weird startled snorfling noise.

“Billy,” Steve whispered, yanking his hand back—his thumb scraped along Billy’s teeth, and Billy winced, wiping his mouth. “Billy, *listen*—Billy.” He grabbed Billy by the shoulders of his jacket and held him at arm’s length. “*Stop.*”

“Shit,” Billy said, realizing he’d screwed up, as always. “Jesus, you actually want to talk. Okay. Shit.” His dick didn’t even *care*, still pounding with all the blood in his body as Billy avoided looking at Steve’s face. Billy pushed back to sit on the toilet. “Sorry. Sorry, shoot, go ahead.”

“...Billy,” Steve repeated, stepping close again, and Billy nodded, his peripheral vision taking in the misspelled graffiti and lack of toilet paper in the grotty bathroom where he’d hauled a prince. *He’s gonna back out*, Billy told himself, and took a slow breath. “Billy?” his misplaced royalty repeated.

Billy smirked up, wishing he hadn’t promised Max he wouldn’t drink. “Not much like your—your fucking—*consort*, am I. Say your piece, *your majesty.*”

The sweatshirt hood and Billy’s fingers had messed up Steve’s hair, and he pushed it away from his frowning brown eyes. “I just...I’m paying you for the drive here, right, but you weren’t working for *fun*, can you afford to—”

Did he notice I ordered the cheapest food, Billy wondered, the

humiliation sinking deeper in his stomach like he'd swallowed one of the bowling balls. "It's fine, I'll work more next week—"

"No," Steve shook his head, digging his wallet out of his bag.

"The hell do you think is going on here?" Billy asked, watching. "Are—are you trying to *pay me for sex*?"

"No!" Steve hissed, glaring over. "No, I'm just—look, let me give you some money. Now. Let me pay you like my driver. Then I won't—you won't have to think about. Anything."

"Anything like *what*," Billy asked slowly, watching a prince leaf through the wad of cash in his fancy leather wallet, and wondering what he'd been planning with so many bills. They were probably all ones, he realized. For having a good time around town, until he decided he liked the look of his Uber driver.

"Let me just—" Steve groaned, biting his lip, and tucking his wallet away. "You're gonna have my fare to the hotel, and—if you *need* the money, I'll keep—just *take* it," he pushed a stack of bills at Billy, who glanced down at it, then back up.

The top bill was a hundred. "What the fuck," Billy said.

Prince Steve laughed, trying to fix his hair by feel, and avoiding Billy's gaze. "Do—d'you still want a blowjob?"

"What the *fuck*," Billy said once more, with feeling.

"I'm done talking," Steve said, shrugging. "If you—I'm sorry this is awkward, I don't know what to—"

"You *made* it awkward," Billy glared down at the handful of cash, then back up at Steve. "Why the hell are you handing me all this money?!"

"See, now you can get pissed at me," Steve grinned, his eyes flicking up to Billy's expression, then down and away. "Don't have to wonder whether I'll pay up, now. You probably have rent."

"I have *rent*," Billy repeated, waiting for it to make sense. "I still

don't get it."

"I *hired* you," Steve groaned, his back thudding against the door, and sliding down it to sit on the ground as it creaked alarmingly. "I can't—I *hired* you and then *hit* on you, this was such a bad idea—"

"Guess I'm just too sexy for your own good," Billy told him, running his tongue around his teeth, and Steve stared at the motion of his tongue.

"God, you are," he growled, folding his arms over his head. "Can we just—can we just start over? You've got enough money you don't need to work tonight, and I'm—you just saw me bowling."

"...you think I'm gonna act different if I need your money," Billy finally put it together, and sighed.

"I don't know!" Steve flailed a hand, smacking it into the side of the stall. "Maybe you've wanted to smack me this whole time, and you're afraid I won't pay my cab fare! Oh," he stopped short, and whipped out his phone. "Mark me paid, and I'll leave a rave review, then you don't have to worry about *that*—"

Billy pulled his phone out slowly, considering. "So this *isn't* you paying me for sex."

"Hell no, why would you be a sex worker in California," Steve mumbled, flicking the wrong app, opening the weather report, and mumbling in a language Billy didn't know as he fumbled back to the Uber app. "Ugh. You wouldn't even have a *union*, probably—"

The toilet creaked as Billy started laughing. "A *union*? Uber drivers don't even have a *union*—"

"That's terrible," Steve looked up, frowning. "Do you get benefits?"

"What?!" Billy snickered harder, the inside of his skull feeling less sandpapery against his brain as he started to accept that the *prince* he'd hauled into the bathroom was honestly just trying to be a responsible date. And sucking at it. "I think you're thinking *way* too hard about this."

"I bet the owner would take my call," Steve said thoughtfully. "People usually do. Maybe I could get some traction here with my unionization programs."

"...you're some kind of...union activist," Billy asked, weirdly charmed.

"My family took the French Revolution very seriously," Steve mumbled, finally getting the Uber app open.

"Anyway, this is way too much money," Billy flapped it at him. "Way too much money. I could take, like, a *week* off."

"So do it," Steve shrugged, glancing up. "Watch something dumb with your sister. Buy yourself some—" he flapped his hand, "—I don't know. I'd be paying my driver a *lot more* than Uber fare, y'know."

"But he's probably got...training. Bodyguarding, or—or *something*," Billy whispered, staring at the fanned-out bills. Now he took the time to count it up, it was more than a week's worth. More than a month, taking fares. He thought wildly of having money in the *bank*, after paying rent. Not having to wonder whether they'd be homeless if his car broke down and he couldn't work. "This—this is too much, Steve. This is a *shit-ton* of money, I can't—I can't take this."

"Hey, hey," Steve got up to kneel in front of him, pressing Billy's fingers around the money. "It's yours. One-time gift, okay? I'll be less generous next time, I promise. Pretend it came from your boss, okay? Class-action lawsuit for not having a union."

"You're so fucking strange," Billy whispered, but allowed Steve to clasp his fingers closed on the cash.

"Now if I piss you off you can throw a drink on me," Steve said, leaning in to kiss him again, and Billy was *hard* for this total freak, but he started sniggering again into Steve's mouth.

"You were really looking for flying buffalo toys," he whispered, and Steve snorted, shoving him into the wall.

"Shut up. They said *buffalo wings*, they should *deliver*. You want a

blow job or not?”

“I get one?” Billy asked, laughing harder—not that it was funny, just he hadn’t expected to end up on a public toilet, clutching more money than he’d seen in cash outside of movies, with an *actual prince* kneeling, horny, at his feet. “Am I in some kinda gay Hallmark movie?”

“I might be bad at it,” Steve told him, grabbing Billy’s belt, and Billy yelped and squirmed to get his wallet out and stuff the money in, having visions of it scattered across the floor as he threw it like confetti in the throes of orgasm. *And in my life, everything goes down the toilet*, he thought, but leaned to lick into Steve’s mouth.

“Mmph,” Steve mumbled, sliding his fingers into Billy’s hair, and Billy leaned into it, letting Steve tug at his belt, and helping him pull it free. Billy fished out a condom, and Prince Steve, ready to give *Billy Hargrove* a *blowjob* on the floor of the public *bathroom* at a *bowling alley*, grabbed it, and yanked at the packet with his teeth.

He got it open—after just long enough that Billy was about to offer help—and pulled it out, eyes intent as he ducked lower and stuck his tongue out the side of his mouth, aiming the condom and unrolling it like he was in *Mission Impossible*.

He *was* bad at it, to the extent a hot guy doing his best at licking Billy’s cock could *be* bad, and Billy came in an embarrassingly short amount of time, kissing Steve’s head in an overabundance of fondness.

2. Chapter 2

Summary for the Chapter:

Billy's head-over-heels for his prince, and Max has some questions.

Notes for the Chapter:

Merry Christmas!

Prince Steve paid for the hotel—he wanted one with neon lights, ideally a blinking palm tree, for some reason, until Billy explained you couldn't order food. In the face of a royal pout, he offered to pick up pizza, and Steve studied the menu on his phone before ordering five pizzas, deleting them, and yanking Billy closer to consult.

Billy watched him scroll through, and leaned closer. "I could tell you all the reasons you don't want to stay in the *cheapest* motel," he whispered, pressing a kiss to Steve's ear to make him duck his head in a grin, "—but...I've never stayed in a *nice* hotel."

"Ohhhh," Steve trailed off, then pulled him into a soft kiss. "You should—you should definitely get to, I'll take you somewhere *nice*."

Billy breathed a sigh of relief, remembering driving back from his dad's place, Max silent as he got a motel room and brushed rat droppings off the pillowcases. The sticky carpet had adhered to their shoes, making a crisp tape-like noise when he returned with sandwiches, and realized Max had gotten him out of the way so she could cry in the bathroom. He had tiptoed out, walked around the block, and come in again.

The idea of taking a *prince* to a motel with foot-long wads of hair and crud whipping wildly from the front of the AC units, or pipes so rusted out the water looked like old blood...was a great idea for a horror movie, he thought, imagining the cursive, loopy pastel font of the movie he was currently in. *I want a romcom*, he admitted to himself, watching Steve flick the pizzas away to frown at tourist

guide listings.

“The *niciest*,” said Steve, scrolling through search results. “Hot tub?”

“I’d probably be impressed anyway,” Billy told him, staring at the pictures of penthouse suites. “That’s so much money, no!”

Steve grinned at him. “Their security is best. Technically I *am* a target of assassination attempts—”

“*Technically?! What happened?!* ” Billy choked, his hands tightening on Steve’s arm without his permission, like he was going to prevent...something. Steve blowing away in the wind, maybe, or someone shoplifting him. This was what the money was for, he reminded himself, resisting the urge to laugh hysterically—he had *driver duties* now, and one of them was to hang onto his prince’s hand like a helpless moron.

Steve grimaced. “It’s been *years*. And I was in the car with an *archbishop*—”

“What happened,” Billy said, and Steve grimaced, hunching his shoulders.

“A...car...bomb?”

Billy didn’t even think, he just yanked the other *full-grown man* in the car towards him, squeezing his muscular shoulders until Steve banged into the the gearshift. “Jesus christ on a cracker,” Billy whispered.

Steve was muttering something *else* in a language Billy didn’t know, swearing and rubbing his hip, and Billy let him go.

“Shit, shit, I’m sorry,” Billy apologized. “Sorry.”

“I don’t think I was the target,” Steve laughed, reaching over to pull Billy’s face close enough to kiss his cheek, while Billy’s head played a unhelpful recording of every movie explosion he’d ever seen, burning tires spinning away, and people trapped in crushed metal as the gas pooled near the flames. “I was greeting a black archbishop from Zimbabwe,” Steve said casually. “There were nazis—” he flapped his

hand.

Billy made some kind of weird noise in his throat, cleared it, and said “Give me the fucking directions, we’re getting you to a *fucking hotel*.”

“A nice one,” Steve laughed, checking his phone. “We can get dinner.”

“Is that the only time somebody tried to kill you?” Billy asked, staring at the phone and repeating the address in his head, as a mantra.

Steve winced, opening his mouth, then biting his lips. “Uhhhh...noooooo?” he trailed off, and Billy smacked randomly at the passenger seat, unwilling to take his eyes from the road. He connected with *something*, soft hoodie over muscle, and Steve laughed, pushing his hand away. “Um. I...”

“You are a *shitty liar*,” Billy told the prince in his passenger seat.

“Maybe don’t google me,” Steve said, grimacing, and Billy gunned the motor to get through the yellow light. “Why,” Billy hissed. “Did your family get gunned down behind a theater? Are you the *goddamn Batman*?”

“What?” Steve snorted. “No? Aneurysm.”

“Holy shit, Jesus Christ,” Billy said, clenching the steering wheel. “Fuck, I was kidding, goddamn.”

“Just my mom,” Steve shrugged, as Billy shot him a disbelieving glance. “It’s fine, I don’t even remember her, I was just two—”

“Oh my *god*,” Billy choked out. “I’m so *fucking* sorry, holy *crap*.”

“She was a beautiful princess?” Steve said brightly, *laughing* at Billy’s enraged muttering. “My dad didn’t take royal title when he married her—he didn’t want to quit his job—so everybody joked that if he’d been a *prince*, he could’ve woken her up with a kiss. If only he thought ahead, right?”

“That’s *horrible*,” Billy whispered. “That’s *so* fucked up.”

"It's a *little* funny," Steve said, shrugging, and Billy groaned, pulling into the parking lot under the hotel.

Steve was watching out the window, his brain probably somewhere else entirely, when Billy pulled up to the window and accepted the paper ticket. "Oh, wait," Steve said, as Billy pulled around to look for a parking space. "Did you have to pay? I never have to pay, I forgot—"

"Poor little rich boy," Billy muttered. "Nah, I'll pay on my way out."

"Mmn," Steve said, sighing. "Okay."

"Sorry I said stupid shit about your parents," Billy told him, grimacing as Steve got out of the car and wandered away to frown around the parking garage before smiling, waving back at Billy, and pointing triumphantly to the stairs. Billy started to follow, then remembered there was an *entire goddamn crown* rolling around in his backseat, and climbed over to stretch for it, and wrap the thing up in Steve's discarded starchy white wedding jacket. "Jesus," Billy sighed, pinching the bridge of his nose, and getting out. "Sorry, again," he said again, trotting up, and Steve shrugged.

"How nice? You want the honeymoon suite, or—"

"I just don't wanna wake up to a crack-smoking *rat* sucking my dick," Billy told him, eyes narrowed. "You can get STDs from the *sheets* in some of those motels."

Steve blinked, staring at him, his mouth twitching. "That's...vivid," he said, biting back a snicker. "What do you think? I think I deserve a honeymoon suite," he said thoughtfully.

You deserve anything you want, Billy didn't say, or *I love you*. He cleared his throat. "Sure. What's that do? You get wine or something?" He wasn't, strictly speaking, supposed to drink on work nights, but Max would understand. Probably. Billy ran his fingers through his curls, making a face.

"This one sounds like it's breakfast in bed for two—"

"I'm onboard—" Billy cut in immediately, and Steve laughed.

“—they put rose petals on the bed, I guess?”

“Only fair,” Billy nodded, leaning his head on Steve’s shoulder to look at the pictures. “Princes probably need some flowers to feel right. Few woodland animals, maybe.”

“...you saying I should sing at the birds on the balcony?”

“Yeah, charm some pigeons,” Billy nodded. “Tell ‘em you got good and laid on your honeymoon.”

The lady behind the hotel desk didn’t realize they were together, and tried to step between them to take Steve to his room, but she apologized profusely when Steve grabbed Billy’s hand.

Once they got there, Billy stood staring at the glass shower in the middle of the room. “...I feel like a creep just standing here,” he said, frowning.

Steve snickered, pulling the hoodie off over his head. Billy watched him fold it and sit it on a chair, and missed it already—Prince Steve, cozy in Billy’s faded hoodie, smelling like laundry soap. Steve pulled the shirt off too, and then Billy wasn’t thinking about anything but *skin*.

Billy peeled out of *his* shirt, and swaggered closer to lift Steve’s chin for a kiss.

“Mmn,” Steve hummed into it, then pulled away, sprawling back across the bed. He propped himself up on his elbows to rake his gaze up and down Billy’s body.

“Surveying the goods?” Billy asked, flexing, and resisting the urge to cover the slight softness of his stomach, come from nights eating in the car between fares instead of hitting the gym, and evenings with Max eating ice cream and watching stupid TV.

“Never done this before,” Steve said, off-handedly, and Billy folded his arms on reflex, feeling his smile turn a little mean.

“Never what,” he laughed. “Never fucked a guy? Or a what, a servant? Never been this bored?”

“Jesus,” Steve sat up again, brows scrunched over uncertain brown eyes. “You want to stop? We can—”

“No, no,” Billy took a slow breath, imagining his therapist’s voice. *Listen to what people actually say*, she’d said. “Sorry. I—I’m—you’ve never done what. Exactly.”

“Any of this,” Steve said, pulling his legs up on the bed.

He was scrunching himself up, Billy realized, pulling his limbs in to protect his tender underbelly, and Billy forced himself forward and put his hands on either side of Steve’s hot, slightly stubbly face. “Hey, hey, you’re all...pillbugged up. Uh...nobody knows you’re gay?” he asked the prince, in the honeymoon suite, trying to be...gentle.

“I’m not,” Steve said, scooting back against the headboard, and Billy jerked his hands back.

“Well, I’m glad I helped you get that *straight*,” he shot back, scrambling off the bed and yanking his pants off the floor.

“Wait, wait, Billy—” Steve crawled after him, swinging his legs down, and Billy stopped, registering his prince was so hard he was *leaking*, his dick rubbing shiny streaks across his legs as he moved. “I’m not *straight*, wait, I’m—I like men *too*, and—” he frowned into the middle distance, bending his knee up again, to lean his chin on it, “—I was at a red carpet thing and Indya Moore walked by and my *heart stopped*, I swear to god, I am definitely into...” he mouthed at the ceiling, frowning. “Thudes?”

“...sorry,” Billy said, dropping his jeans, and rubbing his face with his hands. “Sorry. I keep—I’m waiting for the punchline, tonight, sorry.”

“I’m sorry,” Steve said cautiously, and Billy walked back over to sit on the edge of the bed.

“No, shit, I’m sorry. Sorry,” Billy said, reaching out to squeeze his

prince's hand. "You're...perfect."

"*You're* perfect," Steve shot back, narrowing his eyes, and Billy snorted a laugh and coughed. Steve sighed. "I should look up the words," he said, beckoning. "So that doesn't...happen again. Come back. Come here."

"Thought maybe I scared you straight," Billy huffed a laugh, scooting closer, and Steve smirked up at him.

"Gonna have to try a lot harder than that," he said.

"Lemme kiss you," Billy told him, feeling hoarse, then jerked with surprise as Steve surged up to kiss him open-mouthed, tasting of mint and latex, and pulling Billy across him onto the bed in a crash of elbows, knees, stiff bridal uniform trousers, and bumping teeth. "God, feels like *I* just married you," Billy whispered, rubbing his nose with a wince where it had connected with Steve's jaw.

He could feel his face getting hot again, but with Steve grinning under him, all he could think about was soft lips, and the warm, firm skin against his. "Should have carried you across the threshold," he whispered, bracing himself on his elbows to hover over Steve's chest.

"Maybe you should've," he said, laughing. "Maybe—"

"Maybe I *should*," Billy said, sliding off the bed to scoop the royal heir into his arms, spin them *both* around—Steve whooped, slinging his arms around Billy's neck and kicking his feet—and walking them out the door of the hotel room.

It locked.

"Oh shit!" Billy breathed, and Steve burst into snickers, hugging him tighter around the neck.

"I've got the keycard in my pocket," he whispered, kissing Billy's jaw. "Husband."

"Shit," Billy answered, laughing along now he knew he hadn't locked them out. Steve squirmed around to dig into his pocket, and waved

it at the door. "Good thing it's not real," Billy said into his hair. "Married to me, Jesus."

"You want a divorce *already*?" Steve asked, blinking wide eyes up at him, and Billy spun them around, kissing him on the way to the bed, his muscles complaining as he wished he'd spent more time at the gym and less time trying to keep track of Max's anime addictions.

"No, no, you want me, you've got me," Billy panted, sitting on the bed and letting them both fall sideways, so Steve's legs were half on top of him.

"Good, I can't take getting dumped that often," Steve mumbled, sliding his hand around the back of Billy's neck, and yanking him into a kiss.

Steve was warm, and laughing, and Billy pushed back on questioning his good luck. *Something had to go right eventually*, he told himself. *Balance out the rest of my life.* He oofed as Steve rolled on top of him.

"Hey," Steve whispered, sliding his hands over Billy's chest and shoulders with a little intent smile like he was exploring the unknown.

"Hey," Billy whispered back, folding his arms behind his back, both so he could watch, and to make his arms flex. "Finding anything good?"

"Started out good, keeps getting better," Steve mumbled, narrowing his eyes as he scooted forward to lean in for a kiss. Billy was already feeling his face heat, wondering who even *said* shit like that, when their cocks brushed, and he groaned, bucking his hips into the sensation. "God, I'm so lucky," Steve mumbled against Billy's lips, and Billy barked a laugh, yanking him in by the back of his head and hair for a *slow* kiss, the kind where Billy could see what made his prince hum happily and press closer.

Steve shifted on top of him, squishing and sliding their cocks together, and Billy made an undignified squeaking noise into his mouth. Steve lifted his head, laughing, and then leaned in again just as a knock came on the door.

Billy didn't even register the noise, pushing himself up on his elbows to chase the kiss he'd been deprived of, but Steve pushed him back down, laughing. "Stay here, I'll get it," he whispered, and Billy blinked after him, bereft.

Room service brought half the menu, it looked like, and Billy stared, sitting up. "...you're probably hungry too," Steve said, laughing, and he lifted a few lids and stuck his finger in one, then closed the lid again and crawled over, sticking a finger full of maple syrup in Billy's mouth as he dropped next to him.

Billy watched him, feeling his skin heat again at Steve's matter-of-fact appraisal of his dick, which was hard as *rock*, dripping from watching Steve peel back out of the robe, and bend over the cart. "...we can wait," Billy said hoarsely, and cleared his throat. "If you wanna eat."

"Hungry for you first," Steve said, lying half on top of him so he could fist their dicks together, and looking kind of delighted as he tried it. Billy wondered in passing if Steve had watched something similar in porn, or invented it himself, but couldn't hold back a groan at the feeling of tight, warm skin on his cock, and Steve's smile as he kissed the syrup off Billy's lips. "Even sweeter," he whispered, and Billy snorted a laugh, his face so hot it *burned*.

He'd meant to make it *good* for Prince Steve, soft and slow, and there he was, pinned and writhing, his fists clenched in the sheets, while the royal hand worked his cock. "Billy," Steve whispered, his breath hot as Billy moaned against his mouth.

"Anything," Billy mumbled back, and came all over their stomachs. Steve was only a few seconds later, and Billy hugged him close, sticky and panting. "Anything," he whispered again, burying his face in Steve's hair.

"You're enough already," Steve laughed, smiling. "I was just saying your name. You're perfect."

Billy snorted a laugh, shaking his head. "Sure," he said, smiling back.

Steve sat up, frowning down at his messy stomach, and Billy swung his legs off the bed and ran to the bathroom. He returned with a wet cloth to wipe up his prince's belly, then fold it and scrub it over his sides, and up his chest, until Steve laughed and kissed him again, squishing the gross washcloth between them. He hadn't tried half the stuff on the menu—even the boring things, like pancakes—and Billy scrambled to shove different flavors at him. Steve rated them all perfect tens.

The next morning, Billy went to slide out of bed and get to class, and Prince Stephen of Blois, Grand Cross of the Order of the House of Orange, rolled over to slide an arm around his waist, kissing his side. The royal stubble tickled, and Billy squirmed around to face his attacker.

“Hey,” Steve whispered, reaching up to stroke his knuckles down Billy's stubble.

Billy realized there was no reason compelling enough to leave, and crawled back over his fare-turned-seducer and prince. “...what are you doing today?” he asked, and Steve raised his eyebrows, then pulled Billy down to lie on top of him. His warm hands slid up Billy's back as he hummed thoughtfully, and Billy was relieved to find the squirming body under him was nearly as hard as he was.

“...thought you said you had class,” Steve whispered, and Billy laughed, nuzzling in to kiss his neck.

“I get...okay grades...” Billy mumbled, catching the skin of Steve's neck between his teeth, and feeling him groan. “...miss a day.”

Steve's groan turned more resigned. “How about we meet again after class?” he asked, and Billy froze, then sat back, frowning down.

“...you can just tell me to stop,” he said.

“I don't want you to stop,” Steve told him, grabbing Billy's hand and kissing it, so Billy could feel the royal breath, warm across his

knuckles. “But you—you *stopped working* to take me *bowling*, I can’t make you miss *school*.”

“It’s okay,” Billy laughed, his eyes fixed on the prince kissing his hand, like they were at Cinderella’s ball. “I’m not that dumb,” he muttered. “I can miss one day.”

“You’re not dumb,” Steve frowned, and Billy’s grin widened.

“You wanna bet, pretty boy?”

“I was...what if I want to...see you again?” Steve muttered, and Billy raised his eyebrows. “You have to tell me no, if I’m interrupting something—”

Billy squinted. “The fuck do you mean, see me again. You’re going back to—to Europe, right?”

“Not today,” Steve sighed, stretching, and then rubbing his face so Billy couldn’t see his expression.

“Just a few days, though,” Billy insisted. “I can free up my time, I’m nobody important—”

Steve dropped a hand to Billy’s thigh. “So you do want to see me,” he said flatly, and Billy swallowed.

“Y-yeah,” he laughed, watching Steve’s hands, instead of his face. “Of course. You got time for me, I’m there.”

“...okay,” Steve said, and he sounded like he was smiling, so Billy looked up to see his foreign royalty with a little grin on his face, and pink cheeks. Billy leaned in to kiss him, and Steve mumbled happily against his mouth. “...alright,” Steve said, stroking his fingers through Billy’s tangled hair. “I’ll see you after your classes. Text me.”

Billy half-wanted to threaten him. Say ‘*if you don’t mean that, just fuck me now,*’ but he took a slow breath, and didn’t do anything *insane*, like punch next to Steve’s head, and whisper threats about liars. “Yeah,” he said, getting up off the bed, wishing he could just—just jack off *looking* at Steve, lying there with his long legs and the

curve of his ass cheek hanging out of the blankets. He thought about Max's face if he admitted he'd tried to ditch work and school for some kind of sex marathon with a stranger, and yanked his jeans up.

"Love to watch you leave," Steve sang, hanging half off the bed, and Billy burst out laughing, and nearly stumbled and fell with his jeans halfway up his hips.

"Call me," he called back as he yanked his sweatshirt on. It smelled like expensive cologne, and he didn't look back as he left, thinking hard about cleaning the kitchen drain to try and get his cock to go back to sleep. Steve yelled something as he closed the door, but Billy just ducked his head and ran for the stairs.

Billy'd organized his classes to be done, most days, by eleven in the morning. It left time for homework, and packing lunches for he and Max the next day, and a nap before work.

At eleven-oh-three, he was playing with his phone, biting his lips, and looking at the contact picture of Prince Steve failing *hard* at bowling. Finally, he tossed it in the passenger seat and drove home.

There was folded, stacked laundry on the table, along with a piece of paper that said 'BROTHER SHAMING: what has he left in his pocket' on which dwelt an empty bottle of sunscreen, a pile of quarters, the now-half-wrapped, linty Starburst candies he'd grabbed instead of cigarettes, a handful of shredded Kleenex, a tube of eyeliner that was oozing blackened water onto the note, tiny bottles of mint schnapps and mint mouthwash, and a gooey pile that might once have been a cookie. Billy bit his lips together, raising his eyebrows, and cleaned his pockets out right there on the table.

It was sort of the opposite of a treasure hunt, usually—wadded up wrappers full of gum, stuff people left in his back seat—but today he slapped down the *wad of hundred-dollar bills* Steve had given him, and heard Max gasp from the doorway.

"Oh my Jesus," she whispered. "*Billy*. Did—what did you—did you

—did you get a *sugar daddy*? Are you—are you letting some asshole millionaire fuck your ass?!” She grabbed his wrist, squeezing it hard, but he was laughing too hard, half-collapsing against the table, to answer helpfully. “Did you rob a *bank*?!” she squeaked. “Did you *fuck a bank robber*?! Billy!”

“No!” He cackled, dropping into a chair, and leaning his face in his arms. “No, no—”

“Is it *real*?!” she hissed, crouching to eyeball the money at face-level, then shuffling close to sniff it. “It smells like *Skittles*,” she whispered. “Billy...you could go to *jail*, don’t whore yourself out to *counterfeiters* —”

He laughed so hard he wasn’t even making noise anymore, and she punched his shoulder.

“At least make them pay with *real money*!” she hissed. “Is your *ass* counterfeit?! No!”

“No,” he wheezed, and she smacked his shoulder.

“*What did you do*,” she growled. “What the *fuck*, brother mine.”

“It’s real,” he whispered, trying to stop giggling. “It’s real, it’s fine.”

“What did you do to get it,” she asked, eyes narrowed, and he grinned at her ferocity. “*Billy*. Are you *safe*,” she asked, grabbing his sleeve, and he nodded, wiping his eyes.

“It’s fine, Max, I *swear*. I didn’t do anything shitty—”

“Did anyone do anything shitty *to you*,” she growled again, like a redheaded wolverine, and Billy started snickering again, grabbing her and noogieing her head until she yelled and yanked hard on a handful of his hair.

“I’m okay,” he told her. “I don’t owe anybody anything, I’m not in trouble, and I didn’t do anything I didn’t wanna do.”

“...okay,” she said suspiciously. “Can we...spend it? All we got is cereal and canned beans.”

"Yeah, go nuts," Billy sighed, leaning his chin on his arms and imagining Steve's grin, pressed against the door of the bathroom stall as he tried to hand his one-night-stand enough money to let Billy relax for a *month*. "Don't, like, blow it all, but get some greens, maybe. I wanna take my car in, see why it's making that whinny."

"Damn. Yeah," Max stared at her hands as she counted the money, then shook her head. "Christ, Billy, we could get a new toaster."

"...it works," he muttered, but eyed it speculatively. "Maybe we should wait. Save it, y'know. Just in case I—"

"It sparked so bad yesterday it was—it was like lightning in the kitchen," she said with a grimace. "I threw a Pop Tart in and didn't have the lights on, and I pushed the thing down and—GAH. Seriously, one of these days, you—you're gonna find me on the kitchen floor with *smoking hair*."

"Okay," Billy nodded, making a face. "But then we gotta save some. I get sick, there's no way to cover bills—"

"I *know* that!" she yelled. "That's why I want a job, asshole!"

"*I can do this!*" he yelled back, and she narrowed her eyes, taking a step back and away, and Billy bit his lips, turning to face the other way. "I—I've *got* this, okay, just—just fucking—go to *school* and shit, you're fourteen—"

"You're eighteen!" she shot back. "You can't even buy liquor!"

"I know!" he shouted at the wall, wanting to *scream*. "I know, I—I'm—we'll get a fucking toaster, okay, I—I got you, will you just—"

"You don't *have* to!" she shrieked back at him, and the neighbor started pounding on the wall.

"Shut up," Billy sighed. He grabbed his phone, stomped into his bedroom, and locked the door.

He could hear Max slamming around in the kitchen, and he groaned,

burying his face in his pillow, when his text alert went off. He clicked it, sniffing.

Prince: You off in time for lunch? Or dinner?

Billy stared at it, and closed his eyes. He took a deep breath, blew out, and texted back.

Billy: Out of school

Billy: don't have to work today because somebody handed me a stack of CASH last night

The phone rang, and Billy cleared his throat before he answered.

"You wanna pick me up? I'll get you lunch," said his prince.

"Y-yeah," Billy nodded, wiping his nose.

"Hey, hey, what's wrong?" Steve asked, and he sounded so *urgent* Billy wanted to *bawl*.

"Nah, it's fine," he said, curling up tighter on the bed. "I—I'll come and—you still at the hotel?"

"Yes I am," Steve said, "I'm—is there anything I can do?"

"You already fucking did," Billy grated out. "I have *money* and my kid sister is all excited to have a toaster that won't *kill* us and worried as *shit* I'll get sick and we won't have any money left—"

"A toaster?" Steve repeated, startled. "Are you—you okay?"

"We'll be *fine*," Billy growled out, his vision blurring with tears again. "I'm—it's *fine*, it's just—" Steve waited, and Billy rolled onto his face, punching the pillow. His throat hurt. "I don't have custody," he whispered. "She—I'm her *step*-brother, you know, I just—god. Anything happens to me, she's—"

Steve was quiet at the other end, and Billy wondered whether he'd hung up. "...but you're fine?" he asked finally. "Right now, you're okay?"

"I can do this," Billy told him, swallowing hard. "She doesn't need to—she's trying to—she's just a *kid*, she doesn't need to—"

"...she's worried about her brother?" Steve asked, and it sounded like he was *smiling*.

"She wants to get some—some sleazy job that'd hire *kids*," Billy growled at him. "Help *pay for things*. She's gonna do something dumb—"

"Maybe there's a way she could help?" Steve suggested, and Billy sat up, glaring out the window, then down at his hands.

"She doesn't need to! She already—she did all the *laundry*, and she's out with your money buying *food*—she'll probably cook something *shitty*—"

"I could get her dinner too," Steve offered, laughing.

"She's *fourteen*," Billy hissed at him, and Steve was quiet for a long moment.

"Uh." Steve paused. "Um...you know you're her brother, right?"

"I'm not, that's the problem—and I *know*, I'm—I'm *trying*, I just can't—I can't get it *right*, I never get anything—"

"Wait, wait, *Billy*," Steve interrupted. "Billy."

"Yeah," Billy whispered, wiping his eyes.

"Just...why do you do all this?"

"The fuck do you mean *why*," Billy yelled. "She *called* me, she—she needed—she needed me to—"

"Yeah, okay," Steve agreed, "—but why'd you do it?"

"I didn't want my fucking dad to fracture her eye socket!" Billy told him, squirming under the covers to muffle his voice.

"...jesus," Steve whispered. "But you did all this for *her*, right. She

moved in with you?”

“I got an apartment,” Billy mumbled. “Ditched my roommates.”

“...so you did it to help her.”

“I *had* to,” Billy groaned. “The hell was I gonna say?”

“You could have called the police?” Steve suggested.

“What, wait until he *does* it?!”

“No!” Steve laughed, sounding a little raw himself. “But all this—all these—all this you do, you do for her? You do *all this* to help her, right?”

Billy narrowed his eyes. “What’s your point?”

“Why can’t she help you?”

“She’s a kid!”

“...can I see you? Can I meet you somewhere?”

Billy cleared his throat, again. “Yeah. Yes. Let me—” he took a deep, shaky breath, and got out of bed. “Where do you want me to go?”

“...what if...” Steve trailed off, and Billy’s throat closed again, as he registered the mess he’d just dumped in a stranger’s lap. “What about a movie?” he asked, and Billy started snickering.

“You can just *hang up*, *jesus*,” he said, stretching. “When somebody starts moaning all this shit. You met me *once*.”

“Yeah,” Steve agreed. “Yeah, once. Liked what I saw, though.”

Billy glared at the phone, his heart pounding as he wondered whether princes actually went to some kind of *charm school*, specifically to cause heart attacks in Uber drivers. ‘Course, *somebody smarter might not take him so serious*, he realized, then groaned dramatically through his fingers. “Fine. Awesome. What movie you

wanna see?”

“I *do not know*,” Steve said slowly. “...trying to search while I’m talking to you, and it kind of...where is there even...”

“I’ll come get you,” Billy told him, smiling irrepressibly. He ducked his head as he walked out of his bedroom, and caught the pajama pants Max threw at his face.

“The hell are you going?!” she asked, sliding across the floor in her socks to glower up at him. “No! We’re watching Die Hard! You said!”

“Gonna meet him again,” Billy said, pulling his shoes on. “He’s leaving town.”

“You’re trading your ass to your drug lord again?” she asked, sounding resigned, and Billy stared at her. “Uh-huh. Try to get twenties this time, lady at the grocery store thought I was a hooker, I think. Probably. Or I robbed a bank? Or I robbed a hooker that robbed a bank—”

“She *what*,” Billy mumbled, horrified, but Max shoved a handful of granola bars in his pocket, and held the door open.

“You got condoms?” she asked, her eyes narrowed, and Billy shouted back a *YES, MAX, I FUCKING DO* as he fled down the stairs, his cheeks *burning* hot.

3. Chapter 3

Summary for the Chapter:

Steve and Billy weather a lousy date, kiss, and make up.

Steve was in the lobby of the hotel, surrounded by three people in black suits with little microphones on their lapels. He stood on a marble floor under a crystal chandelier wearing a silvery tailored suit, and Billy nearly turned on his heel and left, but Steve got a huge grin on his face when he saw him.

It was like sun to a moth, and Billy grumbled under his breath as he stomped over, his gaze firmly on Steve's smiling brown eyes as he hunched his shoulders and ignored the assessments of everyone else in the lobby.

"*There* you are," Steve whispered, putting an arm around him and squeezing as he took out his phone.

Billy leaned into it, taking a shaky breath as he found the warm strength of Steve's arm *way* more comforting than he'd anticipated. "Jesus," he whispered, and Steve paused, then tucked his phone away again, and put both arms around Billy, leaning back to lift Billy's toes a little bit off the ground, and it was so tight it hurt his ribs a little, and so good he thought he might cry. Billy couldn't breathe very well or move his arms, and Steve's suit was probably wrinkling, but he just swayed a little in place, and Billy melted into the warmth.

He took a loud gasping breath, and then another, muffling his face in Steve's collar, and swallowed hard. "Don't ever put me down," he whispered, laughing a little, and Steve rocked him a little more, kissed the side of his head and *put him down*, but pulled him in to hug his head and shoulders, stroking his hair, which was irritatingly *warmer*, and just as hard to breathe through for different reasons.

"How're you doing?" he asked, and Billy groaned, slumping against him, and hugging him back. Steve was solid, and smelled like cologne and clean laundry, and his voice had a smile in it.

Billy's eyes stung. "You're fucking magic," he mumbled, reaching up around Steve's back and wiping his eyes. "It's your fucking *prince* magic, isn't it. God. I lo—" he cut off, clearing his throat, as he realized he'd nearly dumped a whole truck of insanity at Steve's feet.

You just met him, he imagined his therapist saying. *You don't love him, and he certainly doesn't love you.* Billy took a long shaky breath, reminding himself not to cry just because he was shitty at raising a sister, too dumb to get a better job, one bad month from eviction, and Prince Goddamn Steve saw he wanted to be held until his bones creaked for mercy.

"Hrm?" Steve asked, after waiting, and Billy shook his head, pulling back.

"No, I'm—" Billy cleared his throat. "That helped," he said, and his voice cracked.

Steve gave him a kiss in passing on the side of the head, squeezing him again as he lifted his phone and clicked past the lock screen. "I'm bringing up plays."

"...*theatre*?" Billy asked, leaning into his warmth, and hacking out the 'r' like in long-ago French class. "You *classy asshole*—"

"No, how do I get to the *movies*?" Steve asked, sticking his tongue out the side of his mouth in concentration, and Billy snorted.

"Theater ...the 'r' goes at the end, for movies," he whispered, and Steve squinted at him.

"What? Why?"

"My sister thinks you're a druglord paying me for sex," Billy told him, starting to snicker again. "She's convinced it's counterfeit money—"

"*What*?" Steve asked again, covering a snigger himself. "Why would she—"

"I mean, I don't have great taste, usually," Billy admitted with a snort. "But that's a low even for me."

"Didn't you explain?" Steve asked, but he was grinning, scrolling past

movie ads.

“She’s not *worried*,” Billy told him, leaning into Steve’s shoulder as Steve pulled him towards the door. One of the people in suits came with them. “Kinda tempted to show up with something even weirder,” Billy whispered. “See where this goes.”

“Ooo,” Steve nodded, laughing, his soft hair shifting in the outside air. “Weirder than a huge stack of cash.”

“Yeah, I don’t know,” Billy told him, smiling, and a little high on his prince’s attention. He realized he couldn’t stop grinning, and watching Steve’s eyes spark mischievously as they talked, and Billy wished they were further back in the lobby, in the probably-marble bathrooms, where he could smush princes against stall walls. Steve licked his lips, and Billy was so hard he could barely *walk*, remembering the night before.

Even weirder, he wasn’t likely to *get* Steve’s lips on his cock, and he realized he didn’t *mind*.

“We’ll have to come up with something,” Steve nodded, frowning into the middle distance. “One of the kids I know has a pet iguana. You could get bags of dead crickets and hide them somewhere.”

Billy nearly *tripped* laughing, not because it was that funny, but imagining Max’s furious accusations. “Oh my god, I almost want to. She’s already all pissed off, she—she thinks—” he smacked Steve’s shoulder, cackling, “—she thinks you *paid me for sex with counterfeit cash*.”

“Why?!” Steve burst out, snickering harder. “Why would she even—”

“At least it wasn’t counterfeit crickets,” Billy wheezed.

“Like Jack and the beanstalk,” Steve nodded, his grin wide and silly. “Billy, did you prostitute yourself for *crickets*?”

“They aren’t fake crickets! He said they were magic crickets!” Billy shook his fist in the air, cackling. “They’ll grow into an iguana!”

“Is that *good*?!” Steve sniggered, and Billy couldn’t help it, he leaned

in for a kiss, then froze as his lips, on a public street, brushed the lips of a foreign royal who'd intended to marry a woman the day before.

"Oh shit, I'm—I shouldn't have done that," he whispered, digging his fingers in to Steve's shirt, but Steve leaned into it, hugging him close, and turning his head into the kiss with a soft noise in the back of his throat. Somebody whistled, but all Billy was thinking about was the fucking moment in Hallmark movies where the camera swirled around the couple, and probably some confetti or flower petals floated by, and the music swelled.

When Steve stopped kissing him, he nearly sat down on the sidewalk, and Steve and the like, Secret Service lady grabbed him under either arm, dragging him towards the parking garage until he stumbled back onto his feet.

"Holy shit," Billy muttered. "Are you even *out*? Did I just blow your—did I *out* you, shit. Fuck—fucking hell. Why the *hell* didn't that stupid bitch marry you. Kissing like that."

Steve was still laughing at him, but he leaned in again, warm lips pressing briefly against Billy's. "Don't call her a stupid bitch," he said, and Billy nodded vaguely, licking his lips. "And it's fine," Steve sighed. "We were gonna come out anyway. Bi rights."

"...after you were *married*?" Billy squinted at him, and Steve shrugged.

"Nothing anyone could do, then."

"What can they do *now*?" Billy asked, trying to walk sideways to focus on Steve's face. "Who's 'they'? Shit—"

"Billy," Steve stopped, yanking him close for another hug. "...thanks for picking me up."

"Sorry I screwed up," Billy whispered, slumping a little against him, and Steve squeezed him tighter.

"I didn't see any cameras," said the lady in the suit, and Billy startled. "Though if you want to keep this on the down-low, maybe don't kiss on street corners."

"This is Lynn," Steve told him, and Billy nodded against Steve's warm shoulder, then let go to shake her hand. "She has to come because it'll be a shitty date if I get shot."

"And once you decide where you're *going*," Lynn said, "—I'll tell the boys, and they'll meet us there."

Steve shrugged, cocking his head to see Billy's face. "Sorry."

"No," Billy shook his head. "Don't get shot."

"Be hilarious if somebody was into my sex life enough to put it on TV. Your sister might see it."

Billy snorted. "She'd still think I made it up, somehow."

"Why?!" Steve laughed. "What have you been *telling* her?"

"I didn't tell her!" Billy groaned. "Okay, the last dude I brought home, he uh, he got up at three am and drank all the mouthwash, and then pissed on the kitchen floor—"

"Holy crap," Steve said, staring at him, and Billy was fairly sure Lynn snorted as he unlocked the car.

"You're *way* too good to date me," Billy laughed, climbing in, and glancing over the dash. He wished his car had more useful alerts than "out of oil"—it'd be just his luck to have the engine fall out on the road with a *prince* in his car.

"...I'm not too good for you," Steve said, frowning, and Billy snorted.

"I have the name of an ex tattooed on my dick," Billy told him, backing out of the parking spot. "It's *misspelled*."

Steve snickered, but reached over and slid his fingers through Billy's where his hand rested on the handbrake.

Billy decided he could watch Steve laugh all day, and spilled all. "I had to bail one out the other day because he fell down the stairs and broke his leg—"

“What?!” Steve yelled, wiping tears of laughter from his eyes.

“Yeah,” Billy nodded, eyeing the rearview mirror. “Get this, he’s so drunk he decides to get a taxi on his *broke fucking leg*, and he’s gonna go pretend he broke it at the casino so they’ll give him money—”

“What?!” Steve laughed harder, squeezing his hand.

“So he gets there and he can’t get up the stairs, so he yells at security, right, ‘Get me up the stairs so I can sue you! I broke my leg!’”

“Oh no!” Steve gasped with laughter, hugging his ribs as he slumped into the door.

“Yeah, he’s yelling, he *breaks a security guy’s nose with his bottle—*”

“Oh *no*,” Steve wheezed.

“And then he calls me, *from the police station*.” Billy laughed, rubbing his nose, and clearing his throat. “I’m *trash*, is what I’m saying.”

“You’re not trash,” Steve told him, yanking his hand over to kiss it, and Billy nearly ran a red light.

“Don’t do that shit when I’m *driving*,” he hissed, staring at the road. “Give me a heart attack.”

“*I will get you used to it*,” Billy’s *actual prince* said, his eyes narrowed, and Billy’s face heated until he wanted to hide it, and scream into something that would muffle the noise.

“Jesus on a *cracker*,” he mumbled, pulling up at the movie theater.

Steve was fascinated with the concessions, and Billy finally pulled him aside to explain the popcorn options while an exhausted teenage boy with six elementary school-age girls tried to get them to decide on a candy each.

Once they made it to the auditorium, Steve pushed the armrest between them up, and pulled Billy against his shoulder, and Billy lost

track of the movie before it even started. His whole world narrowed to Steve's breathing, the smell of his aftershave, and the feeling of his thumb gently rubbing between the bony bits of Billy's wrist.

When the credits song started blaring, he startled awake. Steve laughed, squeezing his shoulders, and Billy squinted around. "...shit, I think I...missed the whole thing."

"Another lousy date for the list," Steve said, smiling a little uncertainly, and Billy let his head thump into Steve's shoulder.

"Shit, I'm sorry, I suck—"

"I should have let you pick where to go—" Steve grimaced, and Billy couldn't have *that*.

He leaned in to lick Steve's earlobe into his mouth, and let it slide between his teeth, breathing, "No, but you maybe coulda let me get more *sleep* last night."

Steve laughed aloud, tipping his head to catch Billy's mouth with his lips. Billy hummed, letting his eyes shut again, leaning into soft kisses, and wishing the credits would never end.

The credits *did* end, the bastards, and the light came up in the auditorium while he was still pressed up against his prince, who started laughing. "We should probably go," he whispered, and Billy pulled back, licking his own lips, and wishing they were still against Steve's.

"Mmn," said Billy, distracted.

"Hey," Steve whispered, smiling. "Can you hear me?"

"Nope, too sexy," Billy sighed, but stood, brushing popcorn off his lap. "Where to?"

"Dinner?" Steve suggested, and Billy had a brief, stomach-sinking image of himself in some Michelin-star rated place with seventeen forks, where Steve would order a tableful of things Billy didn't

understand, probably all enormous plates with a tiny flavored dab of foam—and something weird, like a live crustacean or a potted plant, that Billy'd have no idea whether he was supposed to look at or stab into. "What's your favorite place to eat?" Steve asked, stretching, and Billy sighed with relief.

"Oh," he said, thinking.

"We can get extra for Max," Steve offered, cocking his head to watch Billy's face. "So maybe somewhere she likes?"

"Shit," Billy breathed, rubbing his face to hide how *red* it was as Steve drug him past the seats by his other hand. "She, um, she likes anything neither of us cooked. Basically."

"You hungry?" Steve asked, slowing to a stop in the lobby at the little quarter machines, for kids, that dispensed M&Ms and plastic rings and fake tattoos.

Billy shook his head, watching him pat his pockets. "...filled up on popcorn," he breathed, as his actual prince fed a ten dollar bill into the change machine, and returned to crouch in front of the bank of machines with a double handful of quarters to contemplate the selection.

"Hrm," said Steve. "What are these little parachute men?"

"Oh," Billy wandered closer. "You, uh," he cleared his throat, watching the tailored suit pull taut over Steve's butt and thighs as he crouched, and over his biceps as he poked through the quarters. "You drop them from somewhere high up. The uh, the little plastic parachute um, y'know. It's a parachute," he said, staring down, as Steve laughed, flashing a grin up at him.

"Hrrrm," said Steve. "Maybe Max needs one of these toys that you squeeze and their eyes bug out."

"She doesn't," said Billy, wrinkling his nose. "I guess maybe she'd use it to threaten people?"

"Ohhh," Steve said, nodding, and began feeding coins into the machine. "I should definitely try to butter her up some."

"I think you probably just shouldn't be a drug dealer," Billy sighed. "Or piss on our floor. She's not *picky*—"

"No, presenting gifts to the family of your intended is very important," Steve said, cranking the machine, and holding up the plastic globe with a little bug-eyed dog in it. He was grinning wickedly. "I have to get her favor, so she'll give me permission to court you."

"Ha," Billy said, not really feeling the humor. "How long are you going to be in town, again?"

"Oh," Steve blinked up at him. "I'm really not sure."

Billy nodded, smiling as Steve suggested buying them both plastic rings, and imagining it sitting in his room, where he knew he'd eventually throw it away, to stop himself poking at it like a sore tooth. *Remember that time a Disney prince made you feel special?* he'd think, feeling a weight on his chest.

"Or fake tattoos," Steve said, watching him. "Maybe I need tattoos? You could put some on me."

"Sure," Billy said, half-listening.

Steve looked up at him for a long second, then dumped his remaining quarters in the tattoo machine and stuffed the tattoos in his pocket without looking at them. He stood, brushing himself off, and laughed uncertainly, watching Billy's face. "Do you—d'you want to go back to the hotel?"

"Oh, are we done here?" Billy asked, snorting a laugh, and Steve bit his lips.

"We could go back to my room," he said slowly, watching Billy's face, and Billy sighed.

"Never mind about dinner?"

"It's only fourteen hundred," Steve said, and Billy squinted at him, then pulled his phone out.

Two in the afternoon. “Fair enough,” he said, half-wanting to suggest another movie, but also feeling like he was in a death scene in a movie that needed to be over already. “You...want me to drop you off? I got homework to do.”

“I thought,” Steve said, pausing, and then taking a slow breath, and making it look refined, unlike Billy’s gasps for air in his therapist’s office. “I thought—”

“What?” Billy asked, tired.

“Are you bored,” Steve said cautiously. “Do...do you want to go home?”

“No,” Billy said honestly, and his prince brightened again.

“Come back to my room with me?” he said, licking his lips, and Billy’s dick twitched in his jeans. “Then I’ll take you to dinner?”

“Oh!” Billy said, and swallowed, wondering whether it would be worse, or better, to have more memories to try and forget. “Yeah,” he said weakly. “Yeah, of course.”

“Sorry I bored you,” Steve said, laughing nervously, and grabbing Billy’s hand to haul him towards the door. “This was dumb, let’s go —”

“It wasn’t dumb,” Billy sighed. “That’s not why I fell asleep. I just—I work a lot, I’m tired. And you’re really...comfortable.”

Steve laughed, but his hand in Billy’s relaxed, a little. His bodyguards fell in as they walked to the doors, but they stayed quiet, only Lynn saying, “Wasn’t a bad movie, actually, don’t know how much of it either of you two saw,” as she climbed in the back seat behind Steve.

Billy kept his eyes on the rearview mirror backing out, with a few glances at Steve. “Why’d *you* miss the movie?” he asked. “Did I snore?”

“No,” Steve said softly, looking away.

Billy felt weird prodding him about it with Lynn in the car, and then as soon as he parked Steve hauled him into the elevator and into a deep kiss, Billy's shoulder blades thumping gently against the back wall. He tasted like a fucking prince, like some kind of classy tea mint he must have stuck in his mouth surreptitiously before they got in the elevator, and his fingers curled against Billy's neck and collarbones, stroking his skin.

Billy gripped the railing thing behind him, gasping for breath in an onslaught of hot, wet kisses as he resisted the urge to yank his prince's suit off *right there* in front of the security camera. He let himself be drug back to the room, staring off at the glass shower as Steve dropped his toys on a chair, his hands tugging at Billy's shirt like he wasn't sure whether to unbutton it or not.

"...want to take a shower?" Steve asked, pausing as he tugged Billy's shirt straighter, and Billy wondered whether he'd looked *untidy* the whole time. Maybe that was why Steve hadn't watched the movie, he thought, his mouth quirking. He realized his date looked like some kind of *vagrant*. "We can, uh, we can take a shower," Steve said, glancing up at Billy's face, then biting his lips. "Whatever you want to do."

"You saying I need a shower?" Billy asked, half-serious, and Steve shook his head, stepping back to drop into a chair with a sigh.

"No," he said. "I'm not...saying that, I just—"

"I can go," Billy offered, and Steve spread his hands in a quick, jerky motion, the least graceful Billy had seen him, but he didn't say anything. "...you just kinda seem like you're done," Billy admitted, biting his lips in a smile, and leaning back against the table as an excuse to clench his fingers on something.

Steve laughed, but he didn't sound very happy. "I guess I am, then." He sighed, pinching the bridge of his nose, between his eyes. "I haven't paid you for driving yet," he said suddenly, standing up, and sliding his phone out of his pocket.

"Thought this was a date," Billy said, sounding sharper than he'd meant to. "I wasn't going to *charge* you for a *date*."

“Yeah, but it was terrible,” Steve laughed, hunching his shoulders a little. “And now you’re pissed at me, so I feel like—”

“Wait, shit,” Billy said, watching him. “No, shit, I’m—I’m not *pissed* at you—”

“...okay,” Steve nodded, smiling. He didn’t look any happier. “Okay, you’re not actually—angry, I just wasted your time.”

“No, no,” Billy let go of the table, and stepped closer to the man in the suit probably worth more than his shitty car, the *actual prince* standing glaring out the window, his shoulders tense because he thought *Billy Goddamn Hargrove* didn’t have fun on his date. “It was fun.”

Steve raised his eyebrows doubtfully, and Billy stepped close enough to grab his hand, then swung his leg over Steve’s legs to sit in his lap. “It was *fun*,” Billy said, firmly. “Kind of a waste of money,” he admitted, cringing, “—I mean, I could have just nuzzled into your shoulder on-on our couch, while Max caught you up on Quentin Tarantino movies...” Billy tightened his grip on Steve’s wrist, imagining that. “—y-y’know, get a pizza. Curl up, um. Make—make some iced tea,” he said, feeling like an idiot.

“That does sound better,” Steve said, smiling down at Billy’s hand, tight on his wrist. He lifted his arm and *kissed Billy’s hand*, his smile wide and warm, and Billy’s heart *pounded*. Steve leaned up to kiss him, asking, “...what are you doing tomorrow? After school. I mean, if you—if you want. If that was an—an invitation, I don’t want to—”

“Jesus, yeah,” Billy breathed, forgetting he had a copy of *101 Best Cocktails* under the back left leg of his kitchen table so it wouldn’t rock, his couch was a futon he and Max had dug out of the apartment dumpster, and sometimes water poured from the fluorescent light in the kitchen when their upstairs neighbors overflowed the sink. “Fuck yeah,” Billy said quietly, tugging his prince closer to lean in for a kiss. “Gonna teach you how to eat Oreos,” he whispered, and Steve laughed, relaxing in his arms.

Billy cupped his prince’s face, keeping his sweaty paws off the tailored suit, and kissed him, inhaling royally subtle cologne. He

wondered what *he* smelled like, in yesterdays' clothes that he'd worn all day in class, and in the bathroom at a bar, getting a blow job. Steve hummed inquisitively, and Billy realized he'd gone still against his prince, biting his lips together instead of kissing back.

"What now?" Steve asked, but he didn't sound annoyed, just curious, and he slid his fingers through Billy's probably-sweaty curls.

"Think I'll take a shower," Billy said, laughing. "I mean, why waste it? You can watch."

Steve just looked back at him, cocking his head, then backed away, nodding. "Uh, okay?"

"I'll put on a good show," Billy promised, getting up to his t-shirt off over his head.

Steve took it from his hand and folded it, his eyes panning up from Billy's stomach and chest, across his shoulders, and up to his face with a smirk, like Billy was really worth taking the time to look at. Billy couldn't help it, his face heated as he shimmied out of his jeans and skivvies, making sure to give his prince the best angle of his ass, and then stand and stretch.

Steve got up and took the jeans too, leaning in to press an urgent kiss to Billy's mouth, so firm it pushed Billy back a step, and he grabbed the royal lapels to steady himself. "You're beautiful," Steve said against his mouth, without a trace of sarcasm, kissing him again, and Billy swallowed back a joke about his standards.

"...sure," he whispered, very aware he *was* good to look at, in the way fast food is delicious, but anyone eating it more than twice begs for something real. "That's me."

"You sure I can't come in with you?" Steve asked, running his fingers down the sides of Billy's neck, and across his collarbones, and taking a shaky breath.

"Sit and watch me," Billy told him, kind of thrilled with the idea that his prince would wait, and watch, and *enjoy* it.

"If I must," Steve groaned, leaning in to kiss him again, lingering this

time, and Billy chased the taste of the mint against his lips, letting his eyes fall closed as Steve's warm hands stroked his ribs. "You're getting cold," Steve whispered, his breath warm, and Billy's cock twitched. "Go get warm, Billy."

"Stupid idea," Billy whispered back, leaning into him, and Steve laughed, hugging him, and running both hands up and down Billy's back. "Fucking—idiotic—idea," he mumbled against Steve's neck, as Steve slid his hands down to squeeze Billy's ass, pulling him closer. "Gonna get you all dirty," Billy breathed.

"Do you want to show off in the shower?" Steve asked, between sucking softly at the tender skin under Billy's jaw. "Or d'you want to go to bed?"

"Anything," Billy mumbled, close to coming right there on his prince's suit.

"Did you want a shower, babe?" Steve asked, *gently*, and Billy stumbled backwards, nodding.

"Shit. yeah. Shit. Keep your—keep your *magic paws* off me, christ. Shit," he muttered, rubbing his face, and *willing* his erection down with thoughts of the rotten food in tupperwares he and Max had had to clean out of the back of the fridge to fit all the new groceries in. Groceries she'd bought with *prince money*.

"Magic paws off," said Steve, dragging a chair over to sit facing the glass wall of the shower, and Billy's hips jerked of their own accord. "Let me know when I can kiss you again," he muttered, folding his hands tightly together as he sat down.

"...I can't *make* you stay over there," Billy told him, grinning as he reached in and turned on the water. "Come take what you want, if you want it."

Steve squinted at him. "No, what? You—you said to—you're not an *it*, what—"

"You know where this is going," Billy laughed, examining the little bottles for shampoo. He'd just linger a little with the suds, he

thought—he was way too eager to touch Steve’s skin again to fuck around with a long tease in the shower. “You wanna hurry me up, you can shove me around a little, I don’t care.”

“...what,” said Steve, as Billy stuck his head under the spray, and sighed, rubbing the the water over his skin, and thinking of Steve in the car the night before, pulling his shirt over his head so the shadow of the water rivulets trailed over his skin.

“F’you decide I’m so sexy you can’t wait,” Billy said, scrubbing the shampoo into his curls, “—you lose that cool and yank me out of here. Teach me not to fucking tease,” he laughed, glancing at his prince, who was staring at him.

“But...you wanted a shower,” he said.

“Yeah, but the worse a thing is that you’re waiting for, the less you wanna wait,” Billy told him, and Steve got up and came over, pressing his hands against the glass.

“You’re worth a ten-minute *wait*, Billy,” he said, frowning, and Billy laughed, shaking the water out of his curls like a dog as an excuse to shimmy his ass. “You’re worth—”

“I dunno,” Billy called, closing his eyes to apply conditioner, “—does that make me worth the wait, or d’you just not want me all that much?”

The door opened, and Billy flinched back, laughing and wiping the soap away from his eyes to see Steve standing in the doorway. “I want you,” Steve said, his jaw set. “I could probably just—I could jizz in my pants standing over there, watching you *soap up*. But I’d never *ever* just—*yank you out of the shower*, what—what the *hell*.”

He sounded *pissed*, and Billy’s body responded, his cock jerking with excitement as his hands trembled, and his throat felt tight. “Don’t, then,” he said, ducking his head back under the water, and forcing a laugh. “...good water pressure in here.”

“Billy,” his prince said, and Billy all at once hoped he hadn’t *noticed* —hadn’t seen Billy nearly come on the spot at the idea that

somebody might want him enough to hurt him. He dropped the soap, and laughed, crouching to scrabble for it. “Billy Hargrove,” Steve said softly, and Billy flinched again, and wondered if he should just drown himself in the shower. About right for Billy Hargrove, he thought, drowning with his mouth open under the showerhead, wondering if it was rain.

“...I’ll get you a towel,” his prince said, finally, walking off to return with a massive soft plush of a towel, and another trailing on the ground that he tossed in the puddle of water coming through the open glass door. Billy just stood there with his face under the showerhead, cursing himself. “...hey,” said the royalty that had picked him up on a whim. “You all rinsed off in there?”

“Yeah,” Billy admitted, turning the shower off, and wiping the water off his face. He leaned into the towel his prince wrapped him in, grabbing the royal face for a kiss. His hair dripped all over them, and Steve tucked it behind Billy’s ear, *gentle* again like he thought Billy was—was some terrified pussy, just because his hands were shaking so bad he could barely hold the towel.

Billy let it drop, pressing his whole naked dripping body up against Steve’s designer suit, and Steve *stopped* him, pulling his mouth off of Billy’s, and stepping back.

“Shit,” Billy mumbled, spinning away, grabbing his phone, and stomping off to the bathroom.

“Billy?!” came Steve’s voice, as Billy dialed his therapist, and then saw the time.

“Shit,” he whispered, and dialed Max.

“Brother mine,” she answered dryly, with an incredibly loud crunching noise he knew meant she was deliberately chewing into the microphone.

“Tell me I could—the-there are—there’s s-somebody out there that would date me,” he said hoarsely, “—that’s not a shithead.”

“What the fuck,” she said, in her *growling* register. “I’m coming to get

you.”

“No, no,” he said, trying to even his voice out. “I’m—he’s being—nice. He’s just—he’s nice, and I’m—I’m spiralling, and it’s after hours for my therapist—”

“...she’s got a degree, though. I don’t think I, um,” said Max, and Billy snorted a laugh.

“Yeah, but you actually like me.”

“So does she,” Max said stoutly, and Billy smiled, leaning his face in his hand.

“See?” he whispered around his fingers. “You’re already doing it.”

“What am I doing?” she asked, suspiciously. “Am I getting paid?”

“You get to pick the next movie,” he told her, and she groaned.

“What the hell do you want to hear?” she asked. “There are good people out there to date? I dunno, you’re kind of an asshole magnet. I want to meet this one. Bring him home.”

“He’s being *sweet* to me,” Billy told her, and she *hrrrm*’d.

“Like...patronizing dickhead sweet, or—”

“No! No, just...” Billy trailed off, his cheeks warm against his hand. “...y’know, this is stupid, I’m gonna go.”

“Fuck that. He’s being what, *good* to you, and you’re flipping your shit?”

“Yeah,” he whispered, and the phone went *dead*. He pulled it away from his ear to frown at it, but the call was still connected, so he bit his lips. She came back in a *burst* of sound.

“OKAY,” she shouted in his ear, and he almost dropped the phone. “Jesus. *Buttercream*,” she hissed, and he snorted a laugh, wondering what word she’d meant to say, or whether she’d censored herself, trying not to freak him out further. “You’ve dated like five *hundred*

assholes, you moron, you had to hit the lottery *eventually*.” Billy burst out laughing, wiping the water off his face. “It’s *true*,” she growled. “You just ran out of dickheads to moon over. Congrats.”

“Okay,” he laughed, nodding. “...sure.”

“I think you should let me arrange a marriage,” she said flatly, and he snickered harder. “I’m not kidding. That’s what they *did* back in the day so some *loser* didn’t sweep in and break hearts.”

“Who am I marrying?” he asked, grinning at the floor, and she hummed thoughtfully.

“Dunno yet. I’ll keep you posted. And I’ll need the login for your Grindr account.”

“No,” he said, hanging up, and then texting *thanks, shitbird*

no problem, she texted back. *nothing like listening to your brother on the shitter, talking about his love life*

fuck you, Billy sent back. *how the hell did you know*

I KNEW IT she sent back, then, *HAHAHAHA LOSER, get off the pot and a flurry of go get ur man and but if hes a prick ill kick his ass to next decade* and Billy rolled his eyes, took a deep breath, and stared at himself in the mirror.

He looked okay, he thought, taking a deep breath. He wasn’t as toned as he’d been before getting Max, but he shoved that thought down, sternly, imagining her left in that house, so her brother could have flatter abs. He had dark circles under his eyes, and assignments written on his hand in pen, and he didn’t look like anything *special*—but he looked okay. He could almost see why someone like Steve would want him—and Billy’d been *right there*, he told himself, as his stomach clenched. Billy Hargrove was *easy*, and Steve had wanted easy.

He’s not expecting anything, Billy reminded himself, thinking he looked pale. *He knows what he picked up, he’s not expecting anything amazing. I’m good enough for a couple of fucks.*

Billy took a deep breath, and rolled his shoulders, running his tongue around his teeth as he practised his slowest smile. *And fucking is something I'm really good at*, he told himself. He winked, swaying his hips, and grinned, opening the bathroom door before he could second-guess himself again.

Steve's head snapped up. He was in the chair where he'd sat to watch Billy shower, and he still had his *suit* on, so Billy sauntered over, and grabbed him by the tie. "Come on," he told his prince, dragging him over to the bed. Steve came easily, smiling, but he clasped his hands around Billy's as soon as they stopped, and *kissed his knuckles*, so Billy yanked his hand back, his face heating like he was a goddamn princess, getting seduced by a Disney prince.

"Stop it," he muttered automatically, but Steve just cocked his head like he had *no idea* what he was doing to Billy just—just *standing* there. "Get on the bed," Billy growled at him, pointing.

Steve glanced from the bed to Billy, blinking, and Billy *tackled* him, pinning him to the bed and kissing him. Steve hummed, smiling against Billy's mouth like there was no place he'd rather be, but then he said "Billy..."

Billy ground their hips together, forestalling the obvious questions.

Steve grunted, his back arching, but he grabbed Billy's head, cupping his face. "Are you okay?" he asked.

"Jesus, shut *up*," Billy shot back, then tried to cover it with another deep kiss, and Steve went all *gentle* with him again, tucking his hair back and stroking his thumbs over Billy's cheekbones. Billy made a weird noise in his throat, feeling like—like he was a *fucking child* who'd had a cry, and shifted his hips again, trying to get with the program.

"Thanks for staying," Steve said, and Billy told him to fuck himself, and started unbuttoning the fancy suit. He tugged Steve into sitting upright with the tie, and slid the jacket off, tossing it over his shoulder before sliding his hands up to undo the buttons on his prince's waistcoat. His skin was lit by the sun across the bed, warm and freckled.

Billy was hard as granite, leaking down onto his thigh. He shifted off to the side, not wanting to drip all over Steve's suit, but Steve laughed and pulled him down into a kiss. Billy grunted into his mouth, annoyed at his prince being so *goddamn cheerful* when Billy was trying to turn him on, and then he tugged at Steve's probably-silk-or-woven-platinum-or-unicorn-fur shirt and found *fucking cufflinks*. "What in the *shit* are these," he spat, and then, "I know what fucking *cufflinks* are," before Steve could respond. "Are these—are these *diamonds* or some shit," Billy demanded, yanking the cuff around to make Steve acknowledge his shame. "Did you take me to see a *fucking Scooby-Doo movie* in *diamond cufflinks*."

"It wasn't Scooby-Doo!" Steve laughed, trying to pull his arm back. "You didn't want to watch that one!"

The poster Steve had pointed to *definitely* had the damn dog on it, but Billy'd fallen asleep before the previews were over, so he didn't have enough evidence to argue the point. "Diamonds?!"

"My grandma says they're lucky!" Steve shouted at the ceiling, with the air of one confessing a crime. "She gave them to me! They were my granddad's!"

"Why were you wearing them today?" Billy asked, tugging them loose, and then getting up to sit them down, squeamishly careful, next to Steve's wallet. "You wanted to get lucky?"

"I wanted to impress this guy I met," Steve said, smiling a little self-deprecatingly. "Didn't work out, I don't think, but at least he's still here. Thanks to my lucky cufflinks."

Billy felt his face heating *again*, and his heart pounded in his chest, so he yanked Steve up by the tie again, focusing on unbuttoning his shirt. "...like you need lucky cufflinks."

"I do," Steve told him, catching his hands again, and before he could do any weird prince things and give Billy heart failure, Billy kissed him again.

"You don't," he whispered. "I'm yours as long as you want me."

“God,” Steve whispered back, grabbing Billy around the back of his neck, and down on top of him, like it didn’t *matter* if Billy’s dick juice rubbed all over Steve’s shiny, gadjillion dollar tailored pants.

“Mmph!” Billy said, giving up, and just lying on top of Steve, who hummed, hugging him and rocking from side to side like a weirdo. Billy groaned, trying to recalibrate his brain on the fly to *gay loser gets lucky with random hookup*, because it kept readjusting to *gay loser gets hopeless crush on the prince from Enchanted*, *cannot reciprocate love songs*, and *ends up in the after-credits comedy scene jacking off and crying, hugging a buffalo plushie with wings*.

“...hey,” Steve said, stopping *again*, and Billy growled in frustration. “...are you sure you’re—”

“Stop asking whether I’m *okay*,” Billy hissed. “I’m *fine*, I’m fucked in the head, but I’m—I’m *fine*, *jesus*. I *said I’m okay*, are you going to believe me, or—”

“Sorry! Sorry,” Steve apologized, grimacing, and Billy felt even *worse*, lying in bed with his fairytale prince and biting his nose off when he tried to have basic manners.

“Shit,” Billy sighed. “I’m sorry—”

“No, you’re right,” Steve said, holding Billy’s face in his warm hands. “You’re right, if you don’t want to—I won’t—I’ll listen, I promise. I will, I won’t ask.”

“Shit,” Billy mumbled again, his eyes stinging.

“Could you promise me something, though?” Steve asked, propping himself up on the bed to peck a kiss on Billy’s nose, “—if—if something I’m doing is making you—if I make you—upset. Tell me?”

“Oh my *god*,” Billy groaned, dropping his face to Steve’s chest, and kicking his feet in anguish over Steve’s wide, earnest brown eyes.

“Like if I’m so bad at blowjobs I accidentally bite your dick off,” Steve said, dropping back to frown at the ceiling, as Billy burst into cackling laughter.

“What?! You think you wouldn’t *notice*? You sayin’ I got a tiny dick, Steve—*mmf*,” he squeaked as Steve yanked him up and kissed him, slinging a leg over Billy’s ass and hugging him close. He had nothing to worry about with *kisses*, Billy thought, his brain faltering at the sensations of Steve’s tongue, and his body shifting under Billy’s, and his fingers cradling Billy’s head. “...god,” he whispered, when he could breathe, and Steve grinned up at him, his smugness radiating.

Billy huffed, scooting up to *teach him some things* about kissing, and pressing him down into the bed—but he lost the thread of his thoughts again pretty quick at the feel of Steve’s tongue hot and soft in his mouth, and Steve’s lips smiling against his. “Jesus,” Billy panted, resting his head against Steve’s jaw as he caught his breath. “Get—get your pants off, christ.”

“You’d have to *move*, though,” Steve groaned against Billy’s mouth, his warm hands stroking over Billy’s ribs. “Seems like a pretty awful idea, from where I’m sitting—”

“It is,” Billy nodded, kissing him again, and grunting as Steve wriggled their hips together, their cocks rubbing through the silvery fabric. “It’s a stupid—*mnng*. Awful idea.”

“I’m made of bad ideas,” Steve sighed, his eyes full of earnest regret, and Billy kissed him. “Terrible ideas.”

“It’s worked out well for me,” Billy whispered, crouching over Steve’s hips to fumble with his fly, and kiss into his mouth. He was clumsy, trying to unbutton and lick into Steve’s mouth at the same time, but Steve groaned, smiling, and propped himself up on his elbows to deepen the kiss.

“You absolute goddamn genius,” he whispered, as Billy yanked at his belt, smiling too hard to properly kiss back.

Notes for the Chapter:

Happy birthday to me! =D

4. Chapter 4

Summary for the Chapter:

Sleepy cuddles, fake tattoos, and Billy's fantasies of more.

Notes for the Chapter:

Horizontal line for sexy scenes!

“I could just...” Billy whispered against Steve’s jaw, “—unbutton your slacks...get your cock in my hand—” he laughed as Steve’s hips jerked up under him. “Jack you off,” he mumbled, and Steve laughed.

“Just remembered your dick tattoo,” he whispered.

“Oh no,” Billy whispered back, freezing in place.

“I didn’t get to see it,” Steve said, giggling, “—in the bathroom, it was kinda dark—” and Billy tried to glower down at the prince underneath him, but felt himself smiling instead.

His face was *hot* with embarrassment, but not...dread, he realized. “It’s dumb as hell,” he mumbled, laughing.

“I want to see,” Steve whispered against his mouth, and Billy laughed harder, groaning.

“You’re gonna lose like fifty points of IQ,” he warned, starting to rise to hands and knees, but Steve grabbed his ass and pulled until Billy settled, snickering, with his legs on either side of Steve’s chest, and his dick, bobbing and leaking, inches from his prince’s chin.

Steve blinked wide, mischievous eyes up at him, and Billy covered his eyes with one hand, prodding his cock to the side with the other, and then felt Steve *burst* out laughing.

“Does that,” he gasped, his hands warm on Billy’s thighs, “—does that say ‘*darn*’?”

Billy shook with laughter, his eyes tearing up, for once, with glee. “It was supposed to be *Daryn*,” he cackled, and Steve laughed *harder*.

“Your dick says *darn*,” he wheezed. “Darn! It-it’s Billy’s dick!”

“It’s worshipful,” Billy told him, leaning into the calloused thumbs stroking his thighs, and scooting down to rest his elbows on either side of Steve’s head, to put himself in kissing distance again.

“Gosh darn,” Steve whispered, giggling breathlessly. “Wow. Jeez. Darn it.”

“Yeah, there you go,” Billy snickered, wiping his eyes, and reaching down between them to undo Steve’s slacks. “Jesus, you’re hot.”

“You’re pretty darn pretty,” Steve wheezed, squeezing him so hard Billy *oofed*. “How much did you like Daryn?” he asked, running his knuckles up and down Billy’s ribs, even as Billy shifted around, finally freeing Steve’s dick from his slacks.

Billy bit his lips, glancing up at Steve’s face, then crawled backwards to tug Steve’s slacks down and off. “...s’it matter?” he asked.

“Just want to, um, y’know, know the team to beat,” Steve mumbled, frowning up, and Billy leaned to kiss the inside of his thigh, on the way to kiss his finally-freed cock.

“He wanted my name on *his* cock,” Billy shrugged, biting his lip. “I dunno, I was drunk as fuck, nobody ever wanted me tattooed on them before. We got in this huge fight like two days later.”

Steve sighed, and Billy swallowed, wondering, as always, how trashy he could get before it was a step too far. “I mean,” Steve sighed, pulling him closer, “I did figure there’d be other interested parties. I just have to—*mmpf*,” he squeaked, as Billy dropped on top of him, kissing his face.

"Are we fucking or not," Billy whispered, sliding his fingers along Steve's neck, and tugging on his tie. "Darn it."

"Hi," Steve breathed, beaming up at him. "We—we darn well are," he returned, in a fervent voice that made Billy's cheeks flush, until Steve mumbled, "Darn it," again, shaking against him, and then dissolved into giggles again. Billy sighed, groaning against Steve's chest, but Steve yanked him close and kissed anywhere he could reach, cackling and squeezing him tight.

"Take your time," Billy muttered, letting himself laugh too.

"Didn't think I could be this happy today," Steve sighed at the ceiling, and Billy could hear the smile in his voice. "Thought I'd be doing some photo shoots," he said softly, "—or on a plane home, maybe."

Billy bit his lips at the ever-present reminder that Prince Steven Harrington wasn't *his*.

"Thanks for staying," Steve whispered into Billy's hair, and Billy laughed sharply.

"Uh," he cleared his throat. "Yeah, about that," he said, lifting his head to frown down at Steve's face, and sliding his hand down to feel over Steve's cock. Steve jerked under him, wide-eyed. "What happens now," Billy asked, sliding his thumb over the tip, and Steve groaned, letting his head loll back with a slow smile.

"Whatever you want," Steve told him, licking his lips slowly, and Billy snorted a laugh.

"No, I mean," he told his prince-for-now, scooting to the side to slide his hand under Steve's thighs, "—what now. They gonna make you marry somebody else?"

"Oh," Steve blinked, his smile dropping even as he squirmed against Billy's hand under the swell of his ass.

"Better make good use of the time, huh," Billy whispered, feeling the muscles of Steve's thighs, and lifting one over his head to lean between, as Steve laughed, wide-eyed underneath him. "If I'm a one-

night stand,” Billy said, then cocked his head. Steve pulled him down so Billy’s weight was on Steve’s thighs, and Billy’s own free arm. Steve’s torso shook under him with laughter, and Billy corrected, “—one or two night stand,” frowning, while Steve laughed harder. “—I better make it worth your while—” he said, grinning, letting their cocks brush.

“Shut up, come here,” Steve said, wrapping his legs around Billy’s waist. “They’re not. M’not gonna just—marry *anyone*.” He grunted as Billy grabbed their cocks together. “Jesus,” he whispered. “Uh. Darn. You—you’re not *just* anything, Billy.”

“...just a poor boy,” Billy sang softly, but Steve yanked him into a kiss, wet and hot, and his dick rubbed against Billy’s with agonizing heat and friction. Billy *moaned*, losing his ability to *words*. He writhed against his prince, panting, and Steve held him tighter, whispering a language Billy didn’t know in his ear.

Billy finally got his hand between them, and around both their cocks, and Steve’s whole body arched, his legs tightening around Billy’s waist. “You can fuck me, go on,” he panted, and Billy *came*, right there over their stomachs. “...damn it,” he whispered, and realized Steve was *laughing* at him.

“Sorry, sorry,” he gulped, choking on his own giggles as Billy glared down at his face. “Darn. Maybe I’m good at this,” he suggested, then squawked as Billy growled, crawling backwards, and sank his mouth over the royal dick. “Oh shit, Billy. Billy, *jesus*—”

He rambled on, his hips doing tight little jerks as he gasped with Billy’s every breath, his fingers tight in Billy’s hair, and Billy knew he’d *won* when Steve subsided entirely into another language. It sounded like he was begging.

Even after Billy’d sucked all knowledge of English out Steve’s dick, he was a prince, and he managed to make it clear—patting Billy’s face—that he was about to come. Billy swallowed him down, feeling him shudder and strain, then licked him clean, and crawled up to lie alongside him.

Steve rolled to throw a limp arm around him, and groan contentedly into his neck. “M’not,” he mumbled.

“What?” Billy asked, leaning his head on his elbow. He wrapped his other arm around Steve’s head, and kissed his sweaty hair.

“M’not gettin’ married,” Steve told him, squeezing Billy around the waist, and rubbing his face against Billy’s chest with a sleepy hum.

Billy’s heart thumped, and he told it to shut *up*, because it wasn’t like that meant anything to *Billy*, really. It was hard not to relax into pointless affection, though, with the royalty in his bed rubbing a chiseled jaw over his pecs like an approving cat. “What are you *doing*,” Billy asked, finally, when he couldn’t hold back his snickering.

“You feel good,” Steve sighed, kicking his feet as he squirmed up higher in the bed, and slid his other arm under Billy’s neck to pull him closer. “They weren’t *making* me get married,” he sighed. “It was just this...old-fashioned...politics...thing. When Nancy agreed, she wasn’t, you know. In love with someone else.”

“I’m honored to be your boy toy,” Billy told him, and Steve snorted a laugh, choking. He pulled away and sat up, coughing around what sounded like both his lungs.

“Billy,” he finally said, wiping his eyes. “You gonna miss me?”

There was an unnecessarily obvious answer to that, Billy felt, and he shrugged. “What you want me to say to that?” he asked, letting his mouth quirk into a grin.

“‘Yes’,” Steve said quickly, laughing. “‘Yes, absolutely’.”

“...yeah, I’ll miss you,” Billy admitted softly.

“‘So darn much’, right,” Steve supplied, snickering, and Billy groaned. “Come on, admit it, you know it’s true—”

“I’ll miss you so *darn much*,” Billy said, trying to sound sarcastic, but it came out *way* too raw, and Steve stilled in his arms, watching his face. Billy opened his mouth to try and save the situation—before the *actual royalty* he’d just sucked off called the *police* on him for

sounding like some kind of clingy obsessive stalker—but Steve leaned in and kissed him, slow, open-mouthed, and warm.

“Good,” he whispered, smiling against Billy’s lips. “S’ not fair if only I’m doing the missing.”

“Fuck you,” Billy whispered. “Like you *would*—” and then he didn’t say anything else, because Steve climbed on top of him, lying fully along his body so Billy could barely breathe with the sensations of hot, sticky skin. He held Billy’s head firmly and kissed him and *kissed* him, while Billy raised his hands, startled, forgot about them in midair, and then remembered them abruptly as Steve lifted his head away. Billy grabbed Steve’s head and pulled him back in, feeling him laugh.

Afterwards, they were stuck together and generally disgusting, and as much as Billy privately relished the idea of being glued to his prince forevermore, he poked Steve in the side. “Hey,” he whispered, and Steve squeezed him, sighing contentedly. “Come on,” Billy whispered.

“...where,” Steve asked, suspiciously, and Billy couldn’t help a snicker.

“Shower, come on,” he whispered against the royal ear.

“No, I live here,” Steve mumbled, and Billy laughed. “Stay,” Steve whispered, sliding his hand around Billy’s thigh.

Billy felt his skin warming, probably *glowingly* red—it was one thing, apparently, to suck a man’s cock, and another to have the same man cuddle him, dropping clumsy kisses all over his face. Steve tossed a leg over him, and Billy OOFed, laughing and squirming as their sweaty skin stuck together.

“...how long you want me to stay,” Billy asked, grinning, and Steve stopped placing soft, open-mouthed kisses all down his cheek and

under his jaw.

“Mmmm,” Steve said, squeezing his fingers harder in Billy’s thigh, so Billy laughed, his dick twitching. “You can’t stay here forever, because you have to come with me,” he whispered, leaning in so their noses brushed. “So I can...keep you,” he breathed, and Billy laughed, startled, and lifted his head to press their lips together.

“Mmnh,” he said, then sighed, squeezing his prince closer. “Let me scrub you down in that glass shower you paid for.”

Steve snickered, but sighed, slumping over him. “Why would you want to move?”

“...y’know those fake tattoos you got out of the machine at the theater,” Billy whispered, and Steve snorted a laugh, kissing along Billy’s hand and wrist like he was seducing a princess.

“...the ones for your sister,” Steve whispered over Billy’s damp skin, and Billy shivered.

“She doesn’t want that shit. Look,” Billy whispered, overconfident in his prince’s arms, “—I’ll put ‘em all over you. Lemme up.”

Steve *burst* out laughing, his whole body shaking as he scooted up, kicking his legs, and hugged Billy’s whole head. “Okay, if you’re into that,” he whispered.

“I’m not *into that*, you fucking weirdo,” Billy hissed, his face probably *steaming*.

“I never would have suspected,” Prince Steve whispered in his ear, and Billy *growled*.

He did finally let Billy get up, though, and then he let Billy scrub him all over in the shower, squeezing suds over the planes of the royal back. “I feel like the point of a glass shower is to look in,” he mumbled against the glass, as Billy ran his fingers over smooth, slippery skin.

"I can see just fine," Billy told him, relaxing under the hot water, and trying to keep his prince from just curling up on the floor and drowning with his face against the drain. Steve turned and slid his arms around Billy's neck, and they swayed under the water as he hummed.

It was hard *not* to picture him as a Disney Princess, singing softly and sleepily against Billy's shoulder, and Billy wished, half-awake himself, that the princesses had flings for him to aspire to, because he was pretty sure he wasn't Prince Charming, and thus had only the villainous trajectory in *Frozen* in his future. "Come on, rinse," he cajoled, but Steve insisted on staying in to wash *Billy's* hair, his hands wandering everywhere, even finding the *ticklish* spots just above Billy's ass, and around his sides.

"Fuck," Billy giggled, curling against him, "—stop, you—shit—*fuck* —"

"I'm trying not to tickle you," Steve laughed, squeezing him closer. "You keep squirming! I won't, ssh, hold still—" he promised, finally grabbing Billy's hand and linking their pinkies. "I won't. I won't tickle you."

"...you better keep your promises," Billy told him, letting his voice get a little harsh, because the *prince of a European country* had promised he'd *miss* him, and if Billy never heard another word after letting his imagination *run wild* it'd be...his own stupid fault, of course, but also shitty.

"...I won't tickle you unless it's justified," Steve corrected, and Billy staggered back, his eyebrows raised, but he couldn't help laughing.

"Oh *ho*, the *truth emerges*," he said, reaching over to turn the water off.

"I'll run it by your sister, maybe," Steve said, consideringly, and wiped his face, miming holding up a phone. "Max, your brother thinks he doesn't deserve nice things," he said. "Oh—oh, really? What else should I—I have *free rein*, you say?"

"Shut the fuck up," Billy told him, sliding an arm around his idiot

prince to haul him out of the shower. Steve staggered against him, but Billy didn't let him fall.

Steve sat on the toilet, lid closed, laughing his ass off while Billy ordered him around, covering him in tattoos. Billy decided the prince of a country definitely needed a unicorn on his ass, and a love anchor on his right pectoral. The weird flaming cat that looked like it might have construction equipment for a body—a backhoe, Steve opined, laughing—went above his belly button, though Billy was careful not to get any hair under it, dabbing carefully with wet paper towels at the paper as Steve tried hard not to laugh.

Billy watched the water trail over his prince's abs and down into his pubes, wanting to follow it with his tongue, but Steve looked *tired*, despite his smiling. “Why would you think Max would want this shit, they’re *so ugly*,” Billy asked, grimacing at an eagle trying to eat a flag.

“Sorry,” Steve said, wide-eyed, “—nothing can be quite as lovely as your *darn dick*, can it—”

“Sure can’t,” Billy said, stoutly, and Steve started snickering again, watching Billy’s hands. “This might say ‘Fook nos EVIL,’” Billy said, holding up what looked like a crystal ball, on fire, surrounded by a snake. “Then again, it might not?”

“Ahhh, I love vending machines,” Steve cackled, wiping his eyes, and he held very still while Billy held the tattoo to the back of his hand.

“...I know I can’t put it there,” Billy told him, after waiting for him to yank his hand away.

“You can do whatever you want,” Steve told him, grinning down. “Put it on my face. I *fled a wedding*, they might as well get good pictures of my *ruin*.”

“Covered in fake tattoos the next day,” Billy shook his head, sighing. “Maybe clutch at a bottle of root beer. Then they’ll know you’ve got nothing left to lose. A broken man.”

“Oh my god,” Steve wheezed, then leaned to kiss him, and Billy made a weird HRNK noise in surprise, before leaning into Steve’s warm hands cradling his face.

Steve leaned around amiably as Billy pressed fake tattoos all over him—he’d bought several sheets, which was just *too many*, as far as Billy was concerned, and he needed to understand the error of his ways. It meant long moments of Billy kneeling next to him, waiting for the water to soak the plastic off the paper, stroking a washcloth over and over down Steve’s thigh, or up on one knee, leaning in to press Mary Magdalene along Steve’s ribs.

He kept taking the opportunity to kiss Billy, who leaned into it every time—like Pavlov’s dog, he thought, realizing his brain was just switching off every time Steve touched his face at this point. Steve’s grin was wide and silly. He sat on the counter so Billy could put terrible, blurry skulls on both the tops of his feet, and then leaned over it so Billy could press the unicorn to his ass—which *tickled*, apparently. Billy got some of his own back, slowly stroking the wet cloth over Steve’s squeezable ass while Steve laughed helplessly, smacking the counter and mumbling what were probably swears in Greek.

“I look *ridiculous*,” Steve told him, his eyes surveying the Chinese dragon on his neck, the flaming, ribboned hearts on his bicep, and the flaming cherries just under his collarbone. He looked proud. “Why is everything on fire?”

“You’re hot,” Billy shrugged, snickering as he found a seductively cartoony-eyed dolphin with what looked like gold edges, and placed it squarely between Steve’s shoulder blades. He bent to wet the washcloth again, and wiped the water over it while water dripped down Steve’s back, and their eyes met in the mirror.

“Is that *dolphin* on fire,” Steve asked, in the tone of someone about to ask to see the manager.

“So’s this spider, and this dagger thing. In a skull,” Billy said with satisfaction, beginning a trail of flowers, hearts, and butterflies up Steve’s spine.

“But a *dolphin*,” Steve said, trying to turn and see, and Billy kissed it, and they got thoroughly distracted. Billy even let Steve put some on *him*, watching his prince kneel down, his tongue out in concentration.

“Don’t forget tattoo care,” Billy told him, smiling down at his prince’s bent head. “If you can’t reach them all, you’ll need somebody to rub them with lotion.”

“Oh,” Steve nodded, his mouth quirked as he placed a truly stupid-looking row of skulls across Billy’s chest. “That sounds important. You know anybody up for the job?”

“...I can’t even think of any jokes to make with how dumb you look right now,” Billy told him, honestly, and Steve snorted a laugh, raising his eyebrows at Billy’s skull-covered chest. One of the skulls, for some reason, was also the Italian flag.

“Maybe we should turn the lights off,” Steve suggested, narrowing his eyes, but his mouth was twitching with amusement.

“No, I’m taking a hundred photos. I’m going to send it in as a *scoop* and pay for my college classes,” Billy told him, and Steve blinked.

“Oh,” he said, cocking his head, and then he shrugged. “Okay.”

“What?! I would *not actually do that*,” Billy laughed, but Steve grabbed him and drug him out, and flopped over the bed, sprawled. He pursed his lips, waggling his eyebrows. “I’m not selling it, but I do want photos,” Billy told him, staring. “I think I’m hallucinating. You look like a confusing stock photo.”

“I’m just that hot,” Steve said, rolling onto his stomach, and grabbing an armload of blankets to groan contentedly into.

Billy did snap a couple of shots, watching Steve, but he stayed relaxed, and Billy gave in and took more. “...this is gonna be a whole new spank bank folder,” he said, grimacing, and Steve shrugged. The dolphin burning to death on his shoulder blade flexed.

“See how you react *next* time you see bad fake tattoos,” he mumbled sleepily, and Billy paused, cringing, imagining himself staring heart-

eyed at blurry snake-and-flaming-skull art on a vending machine.

“Horrifying thought,” he muttered, getting a picture of the way Steve’s hair fell over his folded arms, and the way his eyelashes laid across his cheeks.

They fucked again, sleepily, when Billy woke up to pee at 4am, and crawled back in to a sleepily mumbling Steve who’d forgotten his English again. Billy tried to lie still, listening with a grin, but Steve rolled over—nearly breaking Billy’s nose with his elbow—and threw an arm around Billy’s waist, yanking him closer. His stubble scraped a little at Billy’s jaw and neck, but Billy liked it—the sandpaperiness was grounding, in the strange pink light of dawn.

Steve muttered in whatever language he was speaking—Billy told himself he’d look up where was prince of the next morning, and set up Duolingo—and Billy grunted, startled, as Steve’s mouth fastened where his shoulder met his neck. Steve’s hand slid warm down Billy’s side, and he shivered, taking a shuddery breath and parting his legs as Steve’s nails scraped gently through the hair around his dick. Billy’s hips jerked, and Steve laughed, his breath hot against the wet skin of Billy’s collarbones.

Steve slid his hand around Billy’s cock, and stroked him slowly, and Billy made an effort to remember *manners*, and fumbled to reciprocate. It was slow, and warm under the blankets—the air conditioning had had Billy shivering in the bathroom—and he let his eyes slide closed, leaning into his prince’s arms. With the hand not busy on his dick, Steve hugged him close.

When Billy woke again—disoriented, since the hotel bed was in the *middle of the room* like it was for *vampires*—Steve was sprawled on top of the blankets and Billy, one foot kicked up in the air, snoring softly into an armful of comforter. He had pillow marks on his cheek.

Billy watched him sleep—the curve of his back, the awful tattoos and moles along his side, the swell of his unicorn-adorned ass—and sighed. The foot Steve had in the air twitched, and the muscles of his thigh and butt flexed. Billy imagined him in their tiny apartment, waking up during hours meant only for professional bakers if he wanted to shower with any hot water. He tried to envision a prince eating Hot Pockets with Billy and Max, and eating on the floor rather than sit on the rock-hard futon they'd found next to the dumpster. Sitting around cross legged, inventing increasingly ridiculous explanations for the reddish/brownish stain in the carpeted doorway to the hall, and laughing over Max's vivid descriptions of the triple homicide she was sure had also broken the edge off the bathroom mirror. He imagined Steve next to them, studying the tap in the sink and analyzing the residue and smell, wondering whether it was safe to drink.

Just to feel the internal ache deepen, he let himself picture a *different* apartment, one where Steve could have his own...office, with a desk, or something, and make important calls around the world, that opened out on a nice kitchen with no peeling seams in the linoleum, and Billy having the time and money to cook food. Once he had a degree, and he could work somewhere that paid better. Max sleeping a room that the *window* closed all the way, so she didn't have to stuff it with pillows, and closet doors that didn't fall off every time she tried to slide them.

Evenings *off*, to gripe about the endless dumb natural disaster movies she wanted to show him. Billy groaned, imagining it, and Steve grunted, his eyes blinking open to squint over.

"Eunh," he mumbled, rubbing the drool off his chin with the back of his wrist. "...Beelly?"

Steve Harrington had an *accent*, Billy realized, feeling like he'd been punched in the solar plexus, and his lungs had forgotten his brain needed air. Steve's hair was smushed flat by the pillow, sticking out in all different directions, and the dim light of morning lit him like an old black and white movie, shadowing around his muscles, down the curves of his spine, and deepening the dimples above his ass. "...you're beautiful," Billy whispered, unintentionally, and Steve snorted, dropping his face back in the blankets.

“Morning face,” he groaned, making ‘face’ into two quick syllables, ‘fay-eece’. He cleared his throat, grimacing, and said “—face,” with the American accent he’d used every other time he’d talked to Billy.

“You have an accent,” Billy said, again unintentionally, and his prince glared over before scrambling *under* the blankets, his feet kicking.

“Nobody’s perfect,” he mumbled, muffled by the pillow, which was *so far from the truth* Billy yanked the covers back off him, ignoring his probably-profane exclamations in a language Billy didn’t know.

He smacked a loud kiss on the back of Steve’s neck, next to the dragon, and got a snorted laugh. “I liked it,” Billy said, uncertainly, into Steve’s shoulder. “Like...getting to know you, y’know. I like seeing you like this—” —*in my bed, in the morning*, he thought. *Every morning*.

“Sexy drool,” Steve said, snorting.

“No, just...asleep next to me, all—you were comfy, so...” Billy trailed off helplessly, wondering incredulously whether Steve had grown up believing singing birds and rodents were supposed to wake up every goddamn morning and fix his hair. “You fishing for compliments here, or what? Sorry?” he tried. “I’m—I’ll stop if you seriously want me to, I’m sorry if I wasn’t supposed to see you when you’re not...magazine ready,” he said, laughing as he watched the shadows on Steve’s exposed side as he breathed, and feeling a little like a creepy stranger, staring through a peephole to look at something he hadn’t been allowed to see. “Um,” he said, into the stiff muscles of Steve’s shoulder, and let go, scooting away. “Shit, d’you want me to leave, fuck, sorry—”

“Why are you buttering me up when I’m half-awake,” Steve asked, rolling over, and sitting up with a groan.

“...I don’t know, Americans are dumb,” Billy told him, trying to salvage the situation, “—I’m sorry, I just—we get weird about accents, we think they’re sexy—look, lemme blow you, let me try this again, reset, come on.”

“Wait,” Steve mumbled, rubbing his face. “You think it’s hot when I say *your name wrong*?”

“Fuck *yeah* I do,” Billy told him, truthfully, his face burning. “I mean, it’s not *wrong*, it’s just how you say it—” he tried to explain, and Steve squinted over, blinking, and then crawled over to slump against Billy’s side, sliding his arms around Billy’s waist. Billy blew through his cheeks, relieved..

“Mmn,” Steve mumbled into Billy’s neck, sighing contentedly. “Mmmkay, fine, s’ry. ...you wake up so *pretty*,” he groaned. “...look like I...came out’ve the dryer.”

“*Me*,” Billy snorted, his whole body heating as *Prince Steve* settled in his arms, heavy and warm from the blanket, curled around him and half-coherent with sleep. His shoulder blades brushed the inside of Billy’s arm, and his stubble scraped against Billy’s shoulder. “Look, okay, best option,” Billy offered, squeezing him closer. “—you don’t wanna let me see your sleep-face, you just stay right there forever. My leg’s’ll go to sleep and then fall off, but it’s not like I’ll need’em —”

Steve snorted, curling tighter, and leaning in with a *thunk* against Billy’s shoulder, so Billy overbalanced back onto one elbow. Steve snickered, climbing on top of him. Billy stared up at the sleep-ruffled royalty above him. “So you’re saying you’re not busy,” Steve whispered. “Today.”

“...I think I can make some room in my schedule,” Billy said, his voice cracking as Steve clambered backwards, and *licked his lips*. In true Disney fashion, as Steve lowered his mouth to Billy’s suddenly painfully-hard dick, Billy felt the urge to burst into song.

Billy came home with two bags of takeout—according to His Highness Steven Harringrove, it was fun to pick things out for your date’s little sister—and a floaty feeling. “Think I’m in a fucking *musical*,” he told Max, who snorted.

“He give you a pile of cash again?” she asked, leaning in to give him

a good set of sniffs.

“...the fuck are you doing?” he asked, raising his eyebrows.

“...you don’t smell drunk *or* high,” she said, narrowing her eyes. “What’s going on?”

“I’m not always *drunk or high*,” he told her, stung, but she rolled her eyes, grabbing the takeout when he tried to turn around and take it back down the stairs.

“You walked in with a dopey grin on your face and said you were in a *musical*,” she told him, rooting through the containers, and then crossing her arms. “The hell’s going on? Seriously.”

“I just *went on a date*,” he growled, leaving out that Steve was a *fare*, a prince, a character in a Disney movie, and a wedding escapee, besides living on another continent and probably already forgetting Billy’s name.

“...yeah huh,” she said, narrowing her eyes at him. “Food this time? Your ass getting cheaper?”

“He is *not paying me for sex*,” Billy hissed, dropping into a chair. “Fuck you, I can *date*.”

“Yeah, huh,” she said again, slurping the room-temperature noodles. “That what it’s called now?”

“We went to a *movie*,” he growled, proud. “And it—it wasn’t his *mom’s couch*, either, we went to a *theater*.”

“You’re fo fad,” she said with her mouth full of noodles, and her eyes full of pity.

“It’s *not* sad!” Billy threw one of the washed Starburst candies at her. “Last night we went bowling!”

“...he’s a *fare?!* ” she pointed her disposable chopsticks at him. “*Billy!*”

“It’s not weird!” he told the table, slumping to drop his forehead

against it. “I mean. It is, it’s super fucking weird—” he stopped at Max’s annoyed grunt, then sighed. “He’s really—he’s so goddamn nice, Max. He’s *really nice*.”

“...huh,” she said, clambering up to sit on the table, and kicking his knee. “...shit sounds hinky.”

“It does, right,” Billy groaned. “Fucking...*sweet* to me, nobody’s—I’m not—”

“...just because you meet *shitty* people,” she said, kicking him again. “Fine if he’s *nice*, okay, but you tell me if he’s *not*.”

“What’re you gonna do?” Billy asked, rolling his head on the table to grin up at her.

“I’ll put Ex-Lax in his food, so help me god,” she said, narrowing her eyes. “He’ll shit his *organs* out, okay—”

“Whoa,” Billy snorted against the table, laughing.

“He makes you *this happy*, okay,” she said, waving her fork at him, with a baby corn on it. “If he fucks you over after this?! He’s—he’s even worse than *usual*.”

“Okay,” he sighed, wishing he wasn’t so *obvious*. The cool table felt good against his hot face.

That night, Max stared as he remembered the plastic orbs from the quarter machines at the theater, and pulled them out of his pockets and his backpack. She took one, and stared at the little Minecraft figure, and the little rubber bouncy balls.

“...what the fuck,” she said, taking one from the pile, as they rolled off the coffee table and around the floor.

“He’s a pinata,” Billy told her. “I fuck him and toys fall out his—”

“Oh my *god*,” she yelled, smacking him with a pillow in each hand. “AUUGH.” Billy snapped pictures of her fury through his cracked

bedroom door, and texted them to his prince.

The next day, Billy checked to see whether he needed to pick up another fare, and then clicked back to the ringing alert, where “unknown number” flashed. He bit his lip, considering, then answered. “Hargrove,” he said.

“Hey,” came a quiet voice, and he almost threw his coffee in the air and over his entire self. “I, uh. I’m not in America anymore.”

Billy shut his eyes, feeling his stomach fall like the world had stopped spinning, and remembering he was an *idiot*. He actually felt *nauseous*, he realized, and laughed silently into his hand.

“Billy?” came Steve’s voice, cutting out a little.

“Yeah,” Billy said quickly. “Okay. Sorry I—sorry if I made you feel like you had to call.”

“No, no, I don’t—I didn’t mean—I want to see you again,” said his prince, and Billy took a deep startled breath, holding the phone with both hands like it was going to get away.

“What—you—you want to video chat? With me?” Billy’s heart pounded. *You could watch me strip off my clothes*, he didn’t say, but he felt his dick twitch, imagining Steve telling him to strip faster, or lean closer to the camera. *You could tell me how fast to jack myself. You could tell me to do...lots of things.* “You c-could, uh. You could show me around your place.”

Steve laughed, startled. “Wha—no! No, I mean, yes, yeah, I can show you my—my hotel here, if you want? Nancy’s getting married, I’m Man of Honor—but I’ll be back in a couple of weeks. I have—I have family there, that’s why I was in town. And I want to *see* you.”

“You’re coming back,” Billy breathed, letting his head thud back against the headrest. “H-how—um, how long for? Do you—do you think—” He held back ‘Can you tell me when,’ and ‘I could get a few days off’, thinking *Like I could afford that*, and ‘You could stay with me’, because Max would murder him if he brought some *stranger*

home, and also the ruler of a country didn't want to sleep on Billy's saggy couch, with Max and Billy packing lunches and watching bad daytime soaps over his head.

The idea made Billy's internal organs lean towards it somehow, longingly, and he shook off the thought of getting up to piss in the middle of the night, finding Steve's long legs hanging over the edge of the couch in expensive pajamas, and pressing a kiss to his bony exposed ankle before tucking him back in. *I'll be lucky if I get another night*, he told himself. "I—I could drive you around. If you don't, uh, if you don't already—you probably have a driver—"

Steve's voice sounded like he was smiling. "We can see how it works out. I think there are some rules for, y'know, security. But yeah. Think about what you want to do. I can probably come up with some more bad ideas about ditching them—"

"We're not doing that," Billy said flatly. "I'm not gonna be in some famous assassination video on Youtube because I drove you around and your *head* got blown off," he hissed, and Steve laughed.

"Okay, maybe just some bad ideas for dates then. You can fall asleep on my shoulder again."

"You asking me out on a shitty date, your highness?" Billy asked, and Steve snorted a self-directed laugh. "Hey," Billy said. "I'll say yes."

"God," Steve whispered. "You sure?"

"Yeah. Yeah," Billy curled around his phone, grinning at his own knees. "'Course."

Billy stayed in the next Friday night, ignoring Max's curious glances. "You gaming tonight?" he finally asked, and her lips thinned.

"Why."

"Thought I might not go out," Billy said, raising his eyebrows, "—but if you want me out of your hair—"

"No!" she bit out, glaring, the way she did when something caught her wrong-footed. "No, that's—that's fine. You...you gonna fall asleep, or...?"

"You wanna do something?" he asked, and she shrugged, watching his face closely.

He was watching her try to finish off a boss with some glowing hammer thing, her fingers clicking across the controller as she leaned back and forth, glowering at the screen, when his phone rang. "Yellow," he said, his voice a little slurred.

"...you drunk, babe?" Steve asked, and Billy laughed, curling up around his phone.

He glanced at the empty cans on the table. "A little," he said. "That okay?"

"I don't know," Steve said softly, but he sounded amused. "Are you safe? Are you *feeling* okay?"

"Yeah," Billy told him, sighing fondly. "M'good. Miss you."

"Oh my *god*," Max growled. "Shut up, you're disgusting."

"Is that Max?" Steve asked, his voice still unusually warm, like he was smiling.

"Yeah," Billy nodded, then remembered Steve couldn't see him. "She's showing me a video game."

"Ahhh," Steve laughed. "Did she drive you to drink?"

"It's not a school night," Billy rattled off, watching Max try to kill the monster-thing for the sixth time. She was growling under her breath. "I can drink on Friday nights, 'long as it's after work, and I'm not, y'know, driving." Max's shoulder thumped against Billy as she leaned, waving the controller, her eyes narrowed, and he laughed. "An' if it's not too much, y'know."

"Oh," Steve said. "That's why you had to tell her I was buying root beers. At the bowling alley."

“Yeah,” Billy sighed. “I’m contract—contra—I contracted obligations.”

“Oh dear,” Steve laughed. “Darn.”

“Don’ call the name of my dick in vain,” Billy told him, and Max choked, swore, and the screen filled with the words ‘RELOAD GAME?’

“You bastard,” she whispered, glaring over.

“I want to kiss you,” Steve said conversationally, and Billy buried his face in the couch, moaning as his prince talked. “You sound happy.”

“My prince called,” Billy mumbled, and Max yelled incoherently at the ceiling, and stomped off to the kitchen. He could hear her slamming the cupboards around, and crumpling something plastic. “You wan’ me to strip?”

“...do you want to?” Steve asked, and Billy nodded.

“...I nodded,” he said.

“Want to show me your room?” Steve asked, softly, and Billy sighed.

“Goin’ in my room, Max,” he called, and she shouted back “THANK CHRIST.”

5. Chapter 5

Summary for the Chapter:

Billy and Steve deal with a long-distance relationship, Billy tries not to get in too deep with somebody like Steve, and Max rolls her eyes over her brother's sweet, soft nougaty center.

I've got another chapter ready, so updates should happen more regularly now we're through the torrent of prompts!

Notes for the Chapter:

Lil teeny mostly-talky sex scene in this one, marked by the horizontal lines as per usual!

Billy stumbled into his room, wishing he'd drunk a little less, and flopped onto his bed—then slapped around beside him for where he could hear Steve's muffled laughter, and found his phone. "Steve," he mumbled.

"You sound sleepy," Steve told him, and Billy growled.

"My dick isn't," he muttered, and Steve laughed again. "It's *not*," Billy snarled, yanking his jeans open. "Heard your voice."

"Ohhh," Steve said. "...that happens to me, too."

"Your dick likes me?" Billy asked, feeling kind of fuzzily like it was a weird question to ask, but Steve sounded like he was smiling when he said "Yeah, babe, it does."

"What about your hands," Billy asked, sliding his shirt up to his chest. "They like touching me?"

Steve muttered something that sounded like *vlakoss*, or *vlakas*, maybe, and Billy mouthed it to himself, so he'd remember. "All of me likes you," Steve said softly, and Billy rolled sideways into his blankets, laughing into his pillow as he flushed.

“...lemme put you on video,” he whispered, feeling kind of like they were hiding, together in his bed.

His face warmed further as Steve whispered back, “Show me.”

Billy’s fingers were clumsy, but finally he could see his prince, leaning back on a shiny green overstuffed chair kind of thing, in a soft yellowy robe, his skin lit with warm morning light. He was smiling, his hair bed-ruffled.

“...oh,” Billy said, biting his lips together, and hoping Steve couldn’t really see the taco stains on his shirt, or the Thomas the Tank Engine twin-size sheets Max had picked up as a joke at Value Village.

“Want to turn another light on?” Steve asked, and Billy snorted a laugh, shaking his head.

“You can see more than enough,” he said, grimacing, and Steve frowned.

“I can barely—”

“Shut up, it’s fine,” Billy sighed, suddenly exhausted. “Look, I’m—I’m going to bed, actually. I’ll—I’ll call you tomorrow.”

Steve blinked back at him, wide-eyed, and Billy hung up, yanking the pillow over his head with a groan.

His text alert—it was the treasure chest noise from one of Max’s Zelda games—made its *ting ting ting* noise, and he lifted the pillow to look. *Sleep well*, Steve had sent. *I miss you*.

Billy nearly called him back, staring at the words, and then sat up and yanked his stained t-shirt off. He flung it into the corner with the other dirty laundry, and then sighed, and stumbled out of bed to gather it all up and stomp downstairs to the laundry room. When he got there, he had no quarters, and he sat heavily against a washer, wiping his eyes, until the door creaked open, and it was Max, carrying the box of detergent.

“What gives,” she said suspiciously, and he shrugged.

“...just thought I’d do some laundry, y’know,” he said, laughing. “I’m such a fucking slob.”

“Did he *say something*,” she bit out, shooting him a glare as she fed quarters into the machine.

“...he didn’t,” Billy sighed, rolling his shoulders, and frowning around the laundry room. “Stinks in here.”

“It’s apartment 312,” Max growled. “She washes and lets it rot. *All the time.*”

“Once I have my degree I’ll get us somewhere better,” Billy promised, wincing. “Once I get a real job.”

“It’s not so bad,” Max told him, grabbing his wrist and hauling him back out. “Come on, you don’t need to watch, that washer knows what it’s doing.”

“...didn’t look all that smart to me,” Billy told her as she drug him back upstairs, not because he desperately wanted to stick around smelling the sour, heavy funk of rotting laundry, but because Max was *handling* him again, like *she* was the adult. “I bet *I’m* smarter than that washer.”

“I sure *hope* so,” Max told him, shoving him inside their apartment. “You, uh...” she said, glancing up at him, and then frowning, and Billy tried to stop being an asshole.

“I’m fine, Max, play your game,” he told her, and she narrowed her eyes at him. He opened his mouth to try and argue with her cutting look—proving he was actually *not* smarter than a washing machine, really—and his texts chimed again. It was just a red heart emoticon, but Billy’s whole body warmed again at the thought of Steve sitting there for so long, typing and then deleting. He started to send back a kissy face, and then realized it’d be obvious he wasn’t *asleep*, and Steve would *call*, and Billy groaned, mashing his face against his phone.

“...is he being a dipshit?” Max asked, reaching up to grab his phone, and Billy stuck it in his pocket.

“Get one out we can both play,” he told her, waving at the Xbox and dropping on the couch. She grinned, delighted and a little evil, before rummaging around and returning with a selection of five. They looked like little kid games, he thought, all bright colors, but it wasn’t like he *needed* to murder zombies, so he decided to let Max cheer him up. He hummed thoughtfully, and let her lean in and advise—ruffling her hair to make her yell—before sitting elbow-to-elbow with her until nearly midnight, yelling insults at each other and at the screen.

Over the next few weeks, his most royal prince-ness kept *texting*, sending pictures of everything from a frog he found in a downspout licking its own eyeball to pictures of plasticine-covered dead people in a museum exhibit. There were rows and *rows* of people posed like they were playing tennis, or crouching, their skin peeled back to show musculature.

I’m in Germany... said the text, with a picture of Steve posing with a horse whose skin and muscles rippled out like its mane. “#notaserialkiller” he sent, immediately after.

tell that to the horse judge, Billy sent back, grinning.

“Who is this guy,” Max asked, leaning her sharp little chin on his shoulder as Billy flipped his phone so she couldn’t see the screen. He tried to tuck it into his Trig textbook, and it slid out. “Your Uber fare?”

“He’s, uh, he’s not the kind of guy I usually date,” Billy said, swallowing, and thinking about his last ‘date’ before Steve, who he’d never seen in daylight. Billy’d awoken—hungover, late to class, on the floor, with his head pillowed on the remains of a half-eaten six-foot Subway sandwich, and a used condom stuck to his thigh—to Max’s unimpressed glower. He tried to imagine Steve’s clothes on his apartment floor. A crown on his bedside table. “He, uh. He’s a good tipper.”

“That’s a good sign,” Max told him, blowing into his hair as she sighed, her weight against his back, watching the microwave rattle its

way through heating her Hot Pocket. She leaned to flip the phone over— *My Prince*, it proclaimed. *Three missed calls*.

“He’s a nice guy,” Billy told her, trying to grab his phone back. “He’s too nice, probably. Calls me his *bad idea*.”

“If he calls you a *bad idea*,” she enunciated carefully, through gritted teeth, “—he’s not *nice*.”

“No, he’s—it’s not—” Billy groaned, then scrambled to try and snatch the phone back from his sister as she hit *redial*. “Give it back,” he growled, and she raised her eyebrows, knowing he wouldn’t so much as step *towards* her angry, since—since they’d written everything down, how much he’d drink, and when, and how often he’d see his therapist, and came up with rules about when he was angry. “Max,” he hissed, through his teeth, and she smiled her widest fake smile and turned away to talk on the phone.

“Yeah, hey, it’s Billy’s sister,” she said. “Oh, *gee*, did I wake you up?”

“No, no, no,” Billy muttered, trying to block her in around the table, so he could grab the phone, but she paced away, keeping the table between them.

“Your *bad idea* has a sister, didja know? Oh? Huh. Yeah, shut the hell up now. How come you’re giving my brother shit when he calls you *his prince*, huh?”

It sounded like Steve just said “Uhhhh,” and Max growled just like her brother.

“You got money?” she asked sweetly, and Billy slid across the table and grabbed for the phone. She grabbed his little finger and bent it, making him spin in place to face the wall, cursing the self-defense he’d taught her. “Yeah? Okay, how come you’re snogging my brother in bowling alley bathrooms? How come he’s secret, huh? You in the closet?”

“Max, *stop*,” Billy hissed, but she’d frozen in place, and dropped Billy’s hand to grab the phone with both of hers.

“...I don’t know!” she sort of whisper-yelled, and he started laughing.

“What,” she whispered, and Billy started to snicker. “What are you—what?!”

“Give him back!” Billy whispered. “He’s a *prince*, right?!”

“I don’t *know* where he wants to go!” she hissed into the phone, waving Billy off. “But you should *ask* him!”

“Give him back,” Billy begged. “Max!”

“Fine!” she yelled, slapping the phone into Billy’s hand.

He could hear Steve laughing. Billy took a relieved breath, and held it to his ear. “Glad you’re still there.”

“Your sister loves you *so much*,” Steve told him, and Billy glared after her.

“Loves making fun of me, maybe—”

“She’s right, no, she’s right, pick somewhere you’d like to go, okay? I should take you someplace nice.”

“I don’t give a shit,” Billy told him, with a snort. “I seriously don’t care.”

“No, no, look, I found this restaurant, it’s like. There are knights. They fight each other. On *horses*. We could bring her?”

“...what,” Billy mumbled, blinking.

“It’s, um, it’s a medieval...kind of thing. Would she like it?”

“Death-match dining? Fuck yeah.”

“Okay,” Steve took a slow breath. “Okay.”

“...why you so worried, Prince Harrington?” Billy laughed. “You want my little sister to like a restaurant, Mister Royal? My Stevie Wonder?” Billy asked, feeling over-warm again, even next to the air conditioner.

“What?!” Steve laughed. “She’s important to you,” he said, sounding

a little confused, and Billy started laughing, not even because anything was funny, just his stupid *feelings* leaking out everywhere.

“Okay,” he whispered. “Okay, yeah.”

“I, uh,” Steve said, and cleared his throat. “Um. So. Nancy and Barb are having their honeymoon *later*, next—next year, they wanted to know if, uh. Uh, um.”

“Want me to suggest words?” Billy laughed. “I can just say words, tell me when I hit the right one. ‘Chickadee’ is a word, is that any help?”

“Shut up, dickhead,” Steve said, but it sounded like he was smiling. “Darn you. They wanted to know if we want to...drive and meet them. Road trip. Thought I’d be your Uber fare again.”

“...you...what?” Billy mumbled. “You want me to...”

“We can fix it so you don’t miss too much class,” Steve wheedled. “They just need to know your schedule. Max could come.” There was a pause, and then he talked really fast, all in one breath. “Lot of Uber fare, there. I mean, if you’re—if you’re afraid of missing work. You don’t have to come though, it’s okay—”

“No, I—” Billy swallowed, dry-mouthed, imagining—how long?! At least a week?! Of sharing hotel rooms with his prince. “I—yes. Yeah. I wanna go, yeah—”

“Hey,” Steve said, and stopped, and Billy shut his eyes.

“—if you want me to,” he said quickly, wiping his suddenly-sweaty hand on his jeans. “—if you’re not just—you don’t have to—” he tried to take a silent deep breath. “Don’t have to see me if you don’t want to—”

“Babe, babe, no,” Steve told him. “Come on, take a breath, okay?”

“Yeah,” Billy nodded, and did, holding his phone with both hands so it wouldn’t shake.

“Billy Hargrove,” Steve said, “—you know you’re not a bad idea,

right?”

“I’m *your* bad idea,” Billy told him, laughing, and wiping his nose.

“No, no, no— *no*, I didn’t—I never meant—you’re a good idea. Billy. You’re such a good idea.”

“Bullshit,” Billy whispered, laughing.

“Shit,” Steve muttered, and the phone went kind of staticky, like he took it away from his ear. Billy could hear his voice speaking...some language. He’d have to see whether they offered Greek or Danish classes at the college, he thought, listening. When Steve’s voice came back, he was still mumbling in definitely-not-English.

“Need to call me back?” Billy asked.

“What?! No! I need to—I just didn’t—ugh,” Steve groaned. “Look. *Puttemus*. You are a good idea. Leaving my wedding to go bowling without *calling anyone* was a bad idea. Taking a stranger to my hotel for sex was a bad idea. I—*ag*—argh, *Billy*. I did—I did that because I was upset, and—”

“Are you...swearing at me?” Billy asked, fascinated.

Steve’s end of the call went staticky again, and Billy heard him roar—kind of pathetically, like a baby predator at the zoo. “No! You aren’t listening!”

“Oh, I’m listening,” Billy told him.

“I’m so glad I met you,” Steve said hurriedly. “Not someone, *you*. I’m so—thank you for being there. You made me feel better, I—” he started mumbling again, incomprehensibly, and Billy listened, smiling.

“Need to learn more languages, don’t I?”

“...how will I mutter about how stupid I am if you can *hear* me,” Steve huffed. “I’ll have to make up words.”

“...speak English,” Billy told him. “I can’t tell you if you’re being a

dumbass right *now* if I don't understand."

Steve took a deep breath. "I—I think about you all the time. Not just—not just you *naked*, I—I want to take you on a *boat*. I want to watch you out on the water, let you relax. In—in the sun. I want—" he stopped, taking a shaky breath. "—I want you with me. I want you here, I know that isn't—possible always, but I *want* that—"

Billy was doing his breathing exercises, holding it in for a few seconds, letting it out, not because he felt *bad*, but he was feeling a *lot*.

"I'm yours," he laughed. "I-I mean, as much as you want me. I need to be here for Max, but..."

Steve groaned. "I want to *see* you. *Damn* it."

Billy trotted to his room, and hit video call as he dropped to lie back across his bed. "Hey," he whispered as Steve answered, frowning intently at his phone in a flurry of feedback noises.

The tall white arches around him blurred as he walked quickly down a hall, then sat against the wall under some huge portrait with a gold frame. He sighed. "No, this is *worse*, *look* at you."

"I can't see my own face, my eyeballs don't work like that," Billy said, licking his lips—he could *try* to be sexy, he thought, running his fingers slowly down his face to try and look seductive while checking for mustard—and Steve leaned out of frame, muttering in a language Billy didn't understand.

"I want to *see* you, not just...*see* you," Steve muttered, and Billy snorted a laugh.

"Well, I can't fly to Europe," Billy told him, "—so this is what you get."

"I can't *kiss* you like this," Steve huffed, and Billy laughed, punching the pillow up behind his head.

"I could put on a show," he offered. "Probably nothing that great—"

“Holy shit,” Steve breathed, then bit his lips, and frowned away. “Uh. Do—do you *want* to?”

“I got a couple hours,” Billy told him, trying not to squirm as his dick woke up in his jeans, and started feeling squished. “You wanna watch me get off?”

“So much,” Steve groaned. “Um, just a second, okay, I—I gotta make something up, I’ll be right back.”

“Wait, *Steve*—” Billy shouted, but the line was dead, and Billy had the sinking suspicion he always got with Steve Harrington, that Billy’s overeager dick was causing a *war* someplace.

The phone rang again, and Billy answered with “Don’t bail on your job just because I’m *horny*, christ—”

Steve laughed, his face lit mostly by the phone. “Lynn’s covering for me,” he said, as Billy squinted.

“Are...are you in a storage closet, or something?”

“No, I am not in the closet, I told public relations about you, and they’re figuring out what to say,” Steve said cheerfully, as Billy stared at him.

“...what...what did you *tell* them,” he whispered.

“I told them I had a boyfriend, and they should be prepared for somebody taking pictures, or something,” Steve said. “Why?”

The idea of being *the boyfriend* was new to Billy, and he stared back. “...you tell people about me?” he asked softly, and Steve bit back a weird little spluttered laugh, grinning at him.

“I tell *everyone* about you,” he whispered. “I pick up my phone and everyone laughs and rolls their eyes, because I’m checking how long until I can call you, and if you’ve sent a text, everything stops until I send you *hearts* back.”

Billy, who’d been feeling a little dismissed when he’d ask a question, get a string of hearts, and no answer for five hours, groaned,

smacking his hand over his face. “Kinda thought you were telling me to fuck off,” he mumbled into his hand.

“Wha—no, I—why?!” Steve yelled, waving his hands, one of which contained his phone, so everything whirled.

“You didn’t actually *answer*, I dunno, I just—”

“I can answer faster! I’ll answer faster,” Steve told him, grimacing. “I’m sorry—”

“No!” Billy laughed. “No, now I know what the hearts mean, I mean—you’re just busy.”

“I’m busy and I l-like you,” Steve told him, a little clumsy over his words, for somebody who probably had a speech coach. “And I wish I wasn’t busy. But I’m checking my *phone*, because if you *need* me I’m not busy, not for you, I just don’t know whether—”

“Relax, your highness,” Billy told him, grinning. “It’s cute.”

“I’m never *ignoring* you, you’re too *distracting*,” Steve said, his eyes narrowed, and Billy laughed.

“You still wanna see me strip down?” he asked, cocking his head against the pillow, and Steve laughed.

“More than *almost anything*, I just wish I could *touch*—”

“Mmmm,” Billy said, taking the zipper of his hoodie between two fingers, and dragging it slowly down his body, his hand flat. “Maybe you better hurry back and do that, then.”

“God, I wish I could,” Steve whispered, as Billy reached back up to slowly pull one side of his open sweatshirt off his chest, revealing his grotty t-shirt, washed until it was the greyish color all t-shirts eventually ended up. “...you look so soft,” Steve whispered. “Is that t-shirt as soft as it looks?”

“...what,” Billy said, having frozen at the word *soft*, because he’d been drinking *less* beer, and he’d thought he’d prevented his developing beer gut, but then Steve looked *at his stomach*— “My...t-

shirt?”

“Your t-shirt,” Steve breathed, “—and your hoodie. You look so soft, I want to squeeze you.”

“Soft,” Billy repeated, unimpressed. “*Soft?!?*”

“Oh, he thinks he’s *hard*,” Steve laughed. “Only your dick, babe.”

“The man who was *that disappointed* he couldn’t get a buffalo wings plushie does *not* get to lecture me about being *soft*—” Billy told him, growling, but Steve laughed.

“I just wanted a souvenir. I kept a coaster.”

“...you what,” Billy muttered, disbelieving.

“I kept a coaster,” Steve said cheerfully. “From our first date. At the bowling alley.”

“You what...took it back home with you?” Billy asked, sneering a little, but he could feel how wide his eyes were.

“If I can’t drink my Billy, I’ll at least—” Steve began, slyly, but Billy started laughing so hard he stopped.

“If you’re so *thirsty*, how come you’re telling me I’m *soft* instead of seeing the evidence otherwise,” Billy asked, still snickering. He held the phone out to show the lump of his dick in his jeans.

Steve shut up quite respectfully after that, and Billy got to finally tease him with the slow zipper reveal. “Put your hands everywhere,” Steve whispered. “Pretend they’re mine.”

“You’re gonna have to be more specific,” Billy told him, waggling his fingers. “Where d’you want to touch me...your highness?”

“...everywhere,” Steve said again, his brain taking a second to catch up, and then, “Oh, ah, touch—push your jeans down, I can’t *see*.”

Billy snorted softly, thinking maybe he needed to try and get...something sexier, to have on already, when this kind of thing

happened. He couldn't always be wearing stained, stretched-out cotton. He sat the phone aside—Steve *yelped*— and shimmied out of his old saggy jeans, and then grimaced down at the holes along the elastic waistband of his briefs, and yanked those off too. The threadbare t-shirt went next, he pulled it off over his head, and then ran his fingers through his hair, wishing cologne worked through the phone, or that he'd *shaved*. “Prince tames wild jungle beast,” he muttered, glaring into the mirror over his dresser in the dim light. “—suspected to be time traveling caveman.”

“Billy?!” came Steve's voice, laughing, and Billy groaned, scooping it up, and dropping back to lie on the bed.

“Should I get like a...g-string, or something,” Billy blurted out, angling the phone so Steve could see his hard dick, which was looking *stellar*, he thought, surrounded by the red marks from his jeans, on a body that hadn't gone tanning in recorded history.

Steve bit back a laugh. “A *what?*” he asked.

“You know, those stripper wedgies,” Billy said, frowning. “Instead of my stretched-out gray cotton undies...”

“Are they *comfortable?*” Steve kind of *wheezed*, and Billy rolled his eyes.

“I feel like I need to up my game, what with all your...everything,” he said, waving at his prince's gleaming medals. “Look, my dick's *sprung a leak*,” he growled, pointing at it smearing pre-come over his belly, and feeling his face flush as Steve made a weird swallowed moaning noise.

“I'm honored,” Steve said, in a strangled voice, and Billy couldn't help it, he started *cackling*. “Billy,” Steve said, softly, and Billy's dick *bounced*. Billy smacked his hand down over it, blushing hotter. “...you don't need a G-strip,” Steve said, and Billy laughed harder. “Billy,” Steve whispered again, and Billy's cock jerked *again*, and Billy curled onto his side he was laughing so hard. “Billy,” Steve groaned, but he was laughing too. “I love your clothes,” he said, and Billy tried to shut up and listen, shaking with snickers, and wiping his eyes. “You feel good. My clothes are scratchy—”

“Your clothes are fucking *silk*,” Billy told him, grinning. “Don’t try and tell me you’re *always* in that stupid uniform, highness.”

“Every time I see you in your soft shirts I want to hold you,” Steve breathed, and Billy swallowed back a soft grunt at the thought of the crown prince of *anywhere* wanting to put hands on *him*. “I want to slide my hands up underneath.”

“Now you’re talking,” Billy said, grinning, rubbing his thumb over the wetness at the tip of his dick.

“I can’t touch you from here,” Steve said, softly, and Billy sighed, then, reluctantly, took his hand off his cock, and scraped his fingernails down his chest, and up his abs. Steve sounded like he *choked*.

His big brown eyes looked deeper in the shadowy light of the storage closet, and Billy watched him stare, licking his lips. Billy rolled back onto his back, smoothing the flat of his hand up his thigh, and over his belly to grip himself on the ribs in a one-armed hug, and Steve made a soft noise in his throat. “Cristos,” he muttered.

“You’re so easy,” Billy laughed.

“Only for you, malaka,” Steve laughed, and he sounded so fond Billy flushed *hot*, staring at his face, and repeating the word in his head, wondering what he’d just been called. “...with only the light from your mobile, it looks like candlelight.”

Billy laughed, feeling a little gooey, like one of those chocolate cakes that were melted inside. He tried not to squirm, panting as Steve’s eyes narrowed. “Yeah, sure, *blue* candlelight—”

“I wish I could kiss you,” Steve said softly. “Lean over you, slide my hand down to thumb over your cock.”

“Jesus,” Billy panted, gripping himself as instructed, his dick hard as a rock in his hands.

“If I was actually *there* I’d put my *mouth* over it,” Steve huffed, and Billy groaned, licking his hand so he could jack himself. His *feet* started to cramp, he was clenching them so hard, trying not to just

jizz all over himself at the sound of his prince's voice, and he shifted, trying to take deep breaths. "Suck you down," Steve whispered.

Billy came over his fingers, panting, and Steve sighed.

"...I'll be back as soon as I can," he said. "Sorry I had to leave, I mean, I'd...I'd just *met* you, and—thanks for *waiting* for me, Billy."

"...there's not really a long line of people beating down my door," Billy mumbled, curling up, and pulling the blanket over himself as the breeze from the fan over his sweat made him shiver.

"Thank you for waiting," Steve said again, softly. "I want to kiss you as soon as I can."

Two months later, Billy was paying bills, while Max hovered around saying things like "I don't really have to go on school trips, they can't *make* me," and "These sneakers are *fine*." When he was done, there was *just* enough money to pay rent, the water bill, and send Max on the trip with some food money, and Billy folded forward on the table, dropping his face with a thud among the envelopes. His heart was pounding. "...maybe some new shoes next time," he mumbled, and Max kicked his chair.

"These are *fine*," she said stoutly, and he eyed the frayed, greying converses where they sat next to the duct tape. She'd started just wrapping the whole shoe every couple of weeks, and they smelled horrible in the summer heat. "It's so hot the tape kinda sticks to the sidewalks," she said, like that wasn't depressing, and then, "—and I know they've got no traction now, so I'm more careful on the stairs," which was worse.

"...yeah," he sighed.

"...this prince of yours," she said, and he smiled automatically.

"Yeah?"

"...you trust him, right?"

Billy opened his eyes, frowning at her, and she shrugged, biting her lips. "...yeah, I trust him," he said, feeling his stomach twist a little—he trusted Steve to act like Steve, but Billy couldn't help wondering at what point his life would wear Steve to the end of his patience. "What d'you mean, Max?"

She stared back for a long moment, then bit her lips. "...nothing."

"Why are you asking?" Billy asked, trying to think of what she could have seen, passing through while he and Steve played League of Legends.

"Nothing, moron, shut up, he's so *into* you, stop *freaking out*."

"O-okay," he said, burying his face in his arms to hide his grin.

"God, stop," she sighed, but she was gentle as she punched his shoulder on the way by.

6. Chapter 6

Summary for the Chapter:

Billy figures out a way to help his prince, his prince helps him back *way too much*, and they get some things figured out.

Billy's phone rang seconds after the bell did, and he sat his books back down, checking to see whether it was Max's school, and she'd finally decked that one kid that kept—but it wasn't, it was Steve's bowling picture, and Billy grabbed his books awkwardly and ducked around the people coming in for the next class, tucking his phone against his shoulder. "Steve," he said.

"Tell me I'm not a moron," Steve said. He sounded like he'd been running.

"You *are* a moron," Billy said absently, crouching against the corridor wall to stuff his notebook and textbook into his bag. There was silence on the other end, and he bit his lip, considering. "I mean, uh."

"...you're such a help," Steve said dryly.

"You're into *me*," Billy told him, and Steve groaned.

"No, that's *smart*."

"Then you're smart! Ha," Billy said, smirking, and Steve laughed, and blew air through his cheeks.

"...I have to sign a treaty today," he said softly. "I had everyone else read it, all the *smart* people, but—but if it's *wrong*, it's still my fault."

"Hey, hey," Billy said, frowning. Somebody banged into him from behind, and he realized he'd stopped dead in the middle of the hallway. "Your Royalship—"

"This is why the people should *elect* their leaders," Steve groaned, his voice hoarse. "I *failed debate class*! I—I've been reading so much

about taxes, and—and water rights—the letters are blurring, and I don't think I know any more than I did yesterd—”

“Breathe,” Billy told him, walking as fast as he could to the open balcony, and a blast of heat. “Babe. Breathe for me.” Steve took a shaky breath, and Billy bit his lips together hard against the need to *curse* himself for being such a *fucking cunt*. “Shit,” Billy whispered, and Steve started snickering. “You—you’re not a moron,” Billy admitted.

“I’m trying not to be,” Steve said softly. “Y’know they say royalty’s all inbred. Maybe that’s my problem, I probably have *dumb royal braincells*—”

Billy rolled his eyes. His skin shone with sweat already, and he let his eyes close against the glare. “Shut up, you’re not a moron. Did somebody say something shitty to you? ‘Cause I’ll fight ‘em.”

“I think if you punched the Minister of Agriculture, he’d *die*,” Steve said, laughing, with a snuffle. “He’s like a hundred years old.”

“Sounds like it’s time for me to punch him,” Billy growled, and smiled, listening to Steve giggle. “You tell me and I’m on a plane.”

“Maybe I should,” Steve said. “I’d get to see you.”

Billy shut his eyes tightly against the burst of *fondness* that rose and heated his cheeks, and when he could, laughed. “If you need me, I’ll figure it out,” he promised.

“I’ll be all right,” Steve said. “I just—” he sighed. “There just—there are some regulations that...somebody’s telling me they’re for safety, and we can’t let the corporations get away with, you know, giving people botulism—”

“Sounds pretty legit,” Billy nodded, biting his lip.

“But I’ve got somebody else saying it’s actually this new unnecessary process that wastes a bunch of food, and it’s just a way to drive the smaller growers out by making them adopt all this mechanical stuff —”

“...which one does that guy say?” Billy asked, leaning his elbows on the cement edge of the balcony. “The one that called you a moron.”

“Oh, he didn’t, he wouldn’t say it,” Steve laughed, sounding disheartened. “He just—”

“Do whatever he doesn’t want,” Billy hissed, and Steve’s laugh turned more genuine.

“No, no, he’s, uh, he is conservative, but he...he means well,” Steve sighed. “I don’t—”

“Okay,” Billy considered. “Who’s the most onboard with your unionizing?”

“What?”

“That isn’t patronizing at all. There somebody like that?”

“Ah,” Steve was quiet for a long moment, and Billy watched a lady down below unlock her car, climb in and roll down the windows, burn herself on the steering wheel, and scramble out to stand in the shade. “Maybe,” Steve said in a small voice. “But that’s got nothing to do with—”

“Go see what they think. They might at least know who’s in it for profits.”

“Yeah, okay,” Steve said. “I lo—” he cut off, clearing his throat. “I’m so glad I met you, Billy Hargrove.”

Billy’s heart was pounding with what he’d thought Steve was about to say, and he drew a slow breath, wide-eyed. “I’m pretty fucking happy I met you too,” he said back, feeling a little choked.

“Miss you,” Steve whispered, and Billy laughed, wanting to cry.

“Get your posh ass back here then,” he said.

The next day when he got home there were no lights on in any of the

windows in the whole complex, and no porch lights. In the light of the street lamps over the parking area, he could see *extension cords going in through the windows* in half the apartments, like they'd all suddenly forgotten about fire hazards, and blankets stuffed in the gaps. He usually sat in the car for a minute, finishing out a song and soaking in the last of the AC before he had to walk through the late night heat to their apartment building, but he slammed the door and stumbled in the darkness of the street door to the apartment stairs. When he ran around and up, there were no lights on in the hallways, and the heat was so thick it had *weight*. He unlocked the door by the light of his phone, and yelled for his sister, walking into what felt like a refrigerator.

"It's *fine*," came her voice, shouting through a door, and then closer. "The landlord didn't pay the electricity bill," she said, in a familiar voice that meant she was grimacing. "I, uh, I got some dry ice like the um, like, uh, it's in the freezer and fridge."

"What," said Billy, finding her in the dim light from the digital display on the A/C unit plugged in in the middle of the kitchen, and awkwardly touching her shoulder. "Where'd this thing come from? *Max*. Tell me what's going on. How long has the *power* been off."

"Uh," she said again, making a face, and then folding her arms. "I thought...you were working late tonight."

"...did you think I wouldn't notice there were no *lights* when I came in?!" he hissed, stalking away to sit wrong-way-round on a kitchen chair, and lean his head on his arms.

"No!" She waved her hands, an orangey grey blur in the darkness. "No, no, uh—it's—um. I just—"

The power came on in a chorus of hums from the fridge and the overhead fluorescent lights, and the usual AC clicked on over the window with a wheeze. "...they got it back on," he breathed, his shoulders dropping. "Do—do we have to pay the—is the money just *gone*, the money we paid for utilities? I can't afford to—"

"Legally," Max said, stepping forward to touch his elbow, "—it's on him. It's not on us. We won't have to move, unless he *pays* for us to

move.”

“What?” Billy asked, lifting his head, but Max’s phone rang, and she waved him away as she answered.

“...yeah, it’s back on,” she said, glancing back at Billy, and grimacing again. “Um, yeah. Thank you. Yeah, that’s all—no, we’re okay. It’s only been off a few hours! No, we’re—we’re really—thank you. Oh, really?” She snorted. “What happens to people who live in her buildings, then? Oh. Haha, sounds like she deserves it. Thank you. Wha—?” She listened for a few minutes, as Billy’s suspicions heightened, and then laughed again, sounding a little disbelieving. “Oh. Oh, no, um, the air conditioner’s great, I can box it back up for—oh. Uh, really?” Her brows drew together as she stared at it, and Billy registered the box it had come in, sitting to the side.

“Shit,” he whispered, quietly, into his sleeves, and waited for his step-sister to get off the phone. She bit her lips together, avoiding his eyes, and he cleared his throat. “They turned the power off,” he prompted her, and she nodded. “...and you called Steve.”

She nodded again, hunching her shoulders.

“He’s in charge of a *country*—”

“Yeah, I thought maybe he knew some *lawyers*,” she hissed back, and Billy’s stomach went into freefall.

“You asked him to hire lawyers,” he whispered, registering that as a kid, she’d thrown down the only defense she had access to. “—and he sent over an AC unit, *jesus*. ...why didn’t you let me handle it? Why didn’t—you didn’t even *call* me—”

“You were *working*!” she yelled. “You were working *all last night*—”

“The power was off *yesterday*?!” he shouted back, “—there’s a *heat advisory*—there are people collapsing out there—”

“You were at school *all morning*,” she screamed back. “—I thought—I thought you’d be *gone* all night—”

Billy flinched at her volume, his eyes burning. “*Sorry!* Jesus, Max,

I'm—I'm *fucking sorry*, okay, but you can't just—"

"I couldn't even make *cup noodles*," she shouted, sounding like she wanted to cry herself, and Billy clenched his fists around the back of the chair, instead of running back downstairs to work more hours, or stomping off to sleep in his room.

"*I have to work!*" he yelled back. "I could have *brought* you some food, you didn't even *call* me—"

"You said you trusted him!" she said, a little more quietly, her clenched fists shaking, and Billy *remembered* the look she had, her jaw set, too wary to look at him. He remembered it from living at home, and felt *worse*.

"I did say that," he said numbly. "...fine." She flinched back as he stood, and he froze, his eyes blurring with tears. "Sorry you had to...do that," he said through gritted teeth. "I—I'll call the—them, so next *bullshit* she tries, you don't have to...deal with it."

"I dealt with it *fine*," she muttered, and Billy's hands strained on the back of the chair until it creaked.

"...sorry," he whispered, turning away to his room.

"Shut up!" she yelled after him, and Billy shouted back a "*You shut up!*" before he slammed the door, and sank down against it, and fumbled his phone out. He'd dialed before he realized it was *two am* in Greece, and he frantically shut it off, letting his head thump back against the door, and then thumping it harder a second and third time.

He stopped as his phone rang with Prince Charming's song from Snow White.

"Sorry," he answered, in a weird uneven hiss, and cleared his throat. "I'm so fucking sorry, now I fucking *woke you up*, I'm such a fucking moron—useless—asshole—"

"*Billy*," Steve said, authoritative, and Billy sat up straighter, closing his eyes and clenching his fingers in his jeans.

“Y-yeah,” he whispered. He wondered whether it was worth apologizing again, and tried not to sniffle as he felt his tears spill over down his cheeks.

“Are you okay?” Steve asked, and Billy let out a sob before he buried it in his sleeves.

“Of-of course I’m okay,” he laughed hoarsely. “My sister called my *boyfriend* ‘cause she knew I was *useless*, and he—he probably skipped a fucking—*UN* meeting or some shit—probably peace-talking with Iran right now and we’ll *go to war* because my *air conditioning* got turned off, and I’m so *fucking useless* my sister called *you*—”

“Billy. *Billy*,” Steve said again, in the calm voice Billy associated with his kinder teachers. “It was forty-nine degrees there, malaka, I checked online. And it took like thirty seconds, I just told my PA to make a call—”

“Shit, I probably owe you a million dollars in—in legal fees,” Billy realized aloud, letting his head thud back against the door again as he turned the number 49 in his head. He couldn’t make sense of it until he remembered with a shaky huff of laughter that Steve was a prince where they used *celsius*. “Jesus,” he whispered.

“You—no you *don’t*,” Steve huffed. “What the hell are you— *Billy*.” He sighed, and Billy pulled the hood of his sweatshirt over his head, sighing into the warm fabric of his sleeves. “You don’t owe me anything, you don’t—” Steve started again, sounding *annoyed*, and Billy waited, shutting his eyes tighter. “I’m not *that important*, love, you’re not going to cause a *war*.”

“What,” Billy breathed, his comprehension stalling out in the middle.

“You can *always* call me,” Steve told him, breathing a little faster, and Billy pictured him pacing around his gold-and-marble room, walking over his bed in huge steps like it was steep terrain, and scrabbling at his hair. Billy took a slow breath, listening, as Steve repeated. “I *love* you. You can *always* call me.”

“Shit. I thought—” Billy took another deep, shaky breath, trying to focus his thoughts as he wiped *more* tears off his cheeks and relaxed,

sliding sideways to curl up on his side against the foot of the door. “I get another chance still, huh?”

“...you thought I’d...dump you,” Steve said slowly.

“But you didn’t,” Billy laughed, giggling with relief. “Shit. God. You don’t—you don’t have to say shit like that, I’m not—I’m fine, *jesus. Jesus.*”

“Why’re you laughing?” Steve asked, and Billy laughed harder, wiping his eyes.

“Can’t believe you’re okay with this,” Billy whispered. “I figured—”

“You can *ask for help*,” Steve interrupted, and Billy smiled wider, curling around his phone.

“You just wanna strip show later, right?” he whispered, keeping his voice flirty when he wanted to snicker.

“...I seriously don’t know whether you’re kidding,” Steve said, and Billy sighed, pushing himself to your feet.

“...d’you want me to be?”

“I flubbed it and told you I loved you because you sounded upset, and you haven’t said anything, and now you’re laughing at me,” Steve growled, but he sounded a little whiny, and Billy wanted to wrap him in a soft sweatshirt again, and then unwrap him entirely, and kiss every square inch of his body.

“Uhhh,” he said to break the silence, his face heating as he thought of humiliating ways to reply.

“I’m going back to bed,” Steve sighed, and Billy spun to pace in his little room, hoping—like an idiot—that they were pacing in synch.

“No, no, wait,” he mumbled, then groaned. “I—I heard you, I thought—” he trailed off, and the silence lengthened. Finally, Billy forced out “What did you mean?”

“What?!” Steve laughed.

“What does that even—”

“*Billy—*”

“No, look, we—we fucked, right,” Billy said, waving his hand in a decisive chopping motion.

“...we fucked,” Steve said, real quiet, and Billy dropped to lay across his bed, staring at the ceiling.

“We fucked. A couple times. And—and now I call you sometimes when you’re flipping your shit—”

“Or when you are,” Steve put in, and Billy pulled the blanket over his head, groaning.

“I don’t—I didn’t that much, *jesus*. I flipped out a *couple times*, you —” Billy spoke louder, over Steve’s sputtering, “—you call *me* when I’m freaking out, asshole, you *know* you do that, Max fucking *tells* you, I didn’t ask for that, I don’t—”

“Why does this sound like I’m accused of a crime,” Steve muttered, and Billy stopped with his mouth still open, then closed it.

“No,” he said, thinking. “No, I didn’t—I don’t mean that, I mean...I just mean—you can’t—”

“I can’t *what?*” Steve asked.

“You can’t *fall in love* with a hot *Uber driver* you meet for like...a week,” Billy sighed. “Just because I told you some like...jokes. A couple times.”

“Billy. I have known you for *months*,” Steve told him, with the carefully articulated syllables of someone trying to sound patient.

“We haven’t even been able to talk much—”

“We talk nearly every day!” Steve laughed, sounding upset, and Billy’s eyes widened as he bit his lips, considering.

“...no,” he said quietly, laughing. “No fucking way.”

“...I’m going to hang up,” Steve said, and Billy sat up under the blanket.

“No, no, wait, you can’t—I’m not—it’s just—”

“I’m tired,” Steve told him, sounding kind of *sad*, and Billy scrambled for something to say.

“No, there hasn’t been a musical number,” he said, curling around his phone again to concentrate on Steve’s voice as he waited to see whether his prince would laugh.

“...what?!” Steve asked. “The hell are you—”

“I can fall for you,” Billy told him, feeling like the five short words took all his oxygen. “*I—I can. F-fall in...but y-you’re a prince. Th-*there hasn’t been a musical number.”

“...you saying you’re in love with me?” Steve asked, and Billy wanted to hide, his pounding heart telling him to *say* it, or Steve would be hurt, but also not to, because *Billy Hargrove’s love* wasn’t valuable enough to take up somebody’s time.

“...you tromped right the fuck into my—my heart when you tried to buy a plush winged buffalo,” Billy admitted, realizing he sounded a little pissed, which was truthful enough. “And *I don’t need a fucking musical number*. Even—even if you hadn’t called, y’know. Gotten in touch. Every time I hear your voice you’re a little more *in here*. I—I wake up thinking *maybe I’ll hear from my prince today*, try to—try to think of funny shit to say so you’ll keep calling...”

Steve made a noise like he was trying to laugh underwater.

“I reread your texts all the time when I need...” Billy trailed off, and took another deep breath. “You’re like a—a goddamn air freshener, I look at you and I—I listen to your dumb voice and it—everything’s—better,” he forced out. “Had to stop calling just to listen to your voicemail,” he admitted quietly. “Cause you kept calling me back. No matter what time it was, you’d call me back, and—and asking what—I-I there wasn’t anything I wanted, I just wanted...you.”

“Please keep calling my voicemail,” Steve laughed, sniffing. “I

thought I scared you off, or—or maybe you were trying to leave bad news. How come you only call when you think I won't answer?! I'll always answer—"

"Don't tell me this shit," Billy hissed, "—I'll take you up on this crap, I *will*, you'll get fifty calls a day because I had to leave class—I was thinking about your dumb face *today* and I kept smiling at the professor and she thought I was *high*—"

"No!" Steve shouted back, laughing. "No, keep doing it! I *want* you thinking about me, you can—you can always—just call and tell me —"

Billy stuck out his tongue and blew loudly. "Oh, yeah," he snorted. "Prince Steven, I'm horny. Ignore that—that ambassador, and watch me take my shirt off, your majesty—"

"Let me get somewhere I can unzip my slacks," Steve laughed, and Billy snorted so hard he choked, coughing. "Make some requests, maybe."

"What d'you wanna request?" Billy asked, letting his voice come out husky. "I'm in bed, by the way. Bring it on."

"You got time?" Steve asked, and Billy could hear his smile. "I want video of you saying you love me."

"Fuck you," Billy mumbled, wide-eyed. "What the *shit*—"

"I'll call you from somewhere public," Steve whispered. "Somewhere nobody can hear me, but everyone can see me, and I'll talk you off."

"Holy shit," Billy breathed.

"Send me video of you in a hoodie," Steve said. "Tell me you love me," and Billy's face heated enough to be the sole cause of the current heat advisory.

"No!" he hissed back, muffled, because he'd buried his face in the pillow. He was fairly sure it'd combust. "Fuck you! No!"

"Don't you want me telling you how to touch yourself in my sash and

uniform,” Steve whispered, snickering. “I’ll wear my crown. You know you want me to—”

“Oh my god,” Billy wheezed. “Now I do. What fucking kink even is *that?!?*”

“I’ll go out on some palace balcony,” Steve said. “Maybe I’ll wave. While you’re squirming around with your hand on your dick. I’ll say stuff like ‘god, you sound amazing, babe,’ and ‘good job’.”

“...you *motivational speaker*,” Billy muttered, meaning it to insult.

“Do I get my video?”

“I don’t know, how good a job d’I have to do to hear it,” Billy shot back, then realized what he said, and buried his face again.

“...you wanna hear you did a good job?” Steve asked, and Billy mumbled ‘damn it, damn it, *damn* it’ into his pillow. “I can’t tell you you did a good job on my *video* until I get it, but I know you will,” he said, and Billy shivered.

“I was just kidding—” he tried to interrupt, but Steve just got *louder*.

“—you do such a good job with your sister, you’re amazing, taking classes and working, you’re not even twenty years old—” Billy groaned incoherently into his pillow, but Steve didn’t *stop*. “You always know what to say because you *listen* to me, like you listen to Max, you’re so *good* at that, you’re so good for me—”

Billy squirmed, shifting in his jeans, and rubbed the bridge of his nose, wishing his eyes would stop burning.

“I could have ended up in anyone’s car,” said Steve, “—I was—I was upset, and I didn’t know what I was doing, and—you—you were really good to me,” he mumbled, starting to sound embarrassed himself. “Say something.”

Billy took a deep, slow breath. “—walked in today and I thought—I realized Max got you to call us lawyers and I...” his breath gave out, and he shut his eyes tightly, pressing his lips together. Steve took a breath, but stayed quiet. “Thought you—thought you’d leave me

hangin’,” Billy whispered, laughing. “Last, uh, last straw, this American slut dickhead who keeps taking you for more money.”

“I want to help,” Steve told him, hoarsely. “Billy. I *want to help you.*”

“You don’t have to!” Billy said, smiling into the middle distance, his eyes stinging with tears. “It’s not—that’s not what you’re *for*, your highness, you don’t always have to *help.*”

“I *want* to,” Steve huffed.

“You’d be perfect already if you were poor and stingy,” Billy told him, narrowing his eyes. “Stop overachieving. The hell am I supposed to say ‘love you’ to somebody like you. Whole universe just popped up an error window.”

“No, it didn’t,” Steve breathed, and Billy could hear him beaming through the phone. “Fuck do you mean *musical number*. You saying I have to write you a *song*? Because I—”

“No,” Billy interrupted, his eyes widening in horror. “No, I’m giving you shit, because you’re a prince—”

“Perform in karaoke? Should I rent some big venue, Billy?”

“No, no, no no no,” Billy sat up in bed, staring at the wall. “What?! No!”

“Tough crowd,” Steve said, laughing like a *shithead*, and Billy tried to resist snickering, his eyes widening in dread.

“No, no, it was a *joke*, you dumb fuck—”

“I’ll have to do both—”

“*How do you even—*” Billy roared, and Steve snickered.

“I better go get started,” he said, sing-songing it. “Did you know I can play the guitar?”

“Of course you fucking can,” Billy breathed. “You’re amazing. Stop,

stop this *right now*—”

“Gonna write you a *love song*—” Steve sang, and to Billy’s horrified and charmed embarrassment, it sounded good.

“Oh no,” he whispered.

Steve made a kissy noise into the phone. “Love you too, babe. That’s just for practise, of course, ‘til I get that song done! Just keep saying I love you. Gotta get it right. Love you, love you, love you! Am I saying it right? It’s hard for princes to say these things without singing—”

“Shut up,” Billy croaked, like a frog.

“I need a *rhyming dictionary* for our musical number,” Steve sang, snickering, and Billy growled. “Maybe I’ll work my way up from limericks. Dick limericks. To dick sonnets. To dick epics—”

Billy hung up on him.

Author's Note:

Thank you so much for wandering in! Lemme know if you liked my story--I lovelovelove hearing from people! Kudos! Short comments! Long comments! Questions! Constructive criticism! Comments as extra kudos! Thanks so, so much! XD

(I try to reply to each one, but if you don't want a response to your comment then please say "No reply please" or "Whisper" so I'll know not to reply.)

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